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Jain Digest

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Chariot Composed of Calculations

Depicting 18000 Shilang Rath

18000 Jewels of Right Conduct that takes a Sadhu towards Moksh



JAIN DIGEST

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On the Cover:

Chariot Composed of Calculations

This artwork is from an unidentified Jain manuscript. It depicts 18000 Shilang Rath – 18000 Jewels of Right Conduct that takes a Sadhu towards Moksh. (Courtesy: The Asian Art Museum, San Francisco)

Disclosure

The Editorial Team endeavors to publish all the materials that are submitted but reserves the right to reduce, revise, reject, or edit any article, letter, or abstract for clarity, space, or policy reasons. The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Team. These articles are published with the authors names. The articles written or published by the Editorial Team are published as a joint contribution of the entire Editorial Team, and not necessarily represent the views of JAINA

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE



On behalf of the Jain Digest Editorial Staff, I wish you a very Happy New Year! Wish you all a healthy, peaceful, prosperous and a spiritually uplifting 2024!

Our hearty congratulations to JAINA's new President Bindheshbhai Shah and all the members of the Executive Committee. Their willingness to serve the Jain community is very much appreciated and we wish them success in all their seva efforts. We would also like to thank our past President Haresbhai Shah and his Executive Committee members for their selfless seva over the past two years.

The editorial team and I are pleased to bring you this February 2024 edition of Jain Digest – our 25th issue since we began our term in October 2015. With blessings of Bhagwan and support & encouragement from all of you, it has been a very fulfilling experience for all of us. The process of choosing the topics & the authors, editing the content, and putting it all together in an appealing manner has been very rewarding, educational, and fun for the team members. Our heartfelt thanks to the JAINA Executive Committee members and JAINA Directors for their unconditional support and for giving us this incredible opportunity to serve. We hope that reading the articles on varied topics has enriched your life and helped you in your spiritual journey.

We began publishing the online version of the magazine in July 2019 and started tracking our readership from the June 2020 publication. It is heart-warming to see that the magazine is reaching people in many countries all over the world – USA, Canada, Mexico, India, Australia, New Zealand, almost all countries in South America, Europe, South-East Asia & Far East and a few countries in the Middle East and Africa. Please note that we do print a few copies of the magazine and mail to those readers in USA who have requested a print version. If you or someone you know would like a print version, please send us request via email at:

jaindigestpublication@gmail.com.

Another satisfying thing for us is that we continue to get articles from authors that have not written for Jain Digest before. In this February 2024 issue we have 19 articles – 8 written by new authors. We appreciate their interest in writing for us.

In this issue of Jain Digest, we are continuing with series of articles in three areas. In the “Jain Sculptures and Art Collections” series, Dhruvi Rathi tells us about a painting from the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco. In the “Art of Giving Back” series, Dilipbhai Shah features Adish and Asha Jain for their philanthropic work in Sammet Shikharji area. In the series of articles by Pathshala students, we bring you essays written by two pathshala students at the Jain Center of Greater Boston.

In this issue, we are fortunate to have articles written by well-known personalities such as Dr. Ramjan Hasaniya, Prof. Cogen Bohanec, Prof. Christopher Jain Miller, Bhavin Jhaveri and Dr Manoj Jain. Dr. Hasaniya's article in Gujarati about the universality of Navkar Mantra will fill your heart with devotion. Prof. Bohanec writes about the life and teachings of our beloved Pujya Acharya Sushil Kumar ji. Prof. Miller educates us on the topic of Jain Yoga and Bhavin Jhaveri explores contemporary applications of Anekantvad and its significance. Dr. Manoj Jain brings us up to date on achievements and plans of JAINA's Long Range Planning committee.

It gives me immense pleasure to bring you articles about two young global personalities that are making a big difference in the world through their selfless seva in the field of Education. Reena Shah tells us more about Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai and Jayana Shah introduces us to Amitabh Shah – founder and Chief Inspiration Officer at Yuva Unstoppable – one of the premier NGOs in India.

In addition, we have an article by Suraj Shah, a psychologist from Mumbai who tells us about how JAINA Psychology helps people with self-esteem problems. A student of Jainism, Yifan Zhang, describes his experience with Ayambil Oli while he was in Bangkok on a field study. Payal Seth tells us how to cultivate inner peace in today's turbulent world through Bhagwan Mahavir's teachings about Bhavanas. On the spiritual path, many of us improve ourselves by reducing our passions and by developing virtues. Ramesh Khandhar explains that we need to go beyond that and focus on our true nature in order to experience our true nature and achieve self-realization.

My sincere thanks to all the writers for their contribution. If you would like to write an article for our next issue to be published in June 2024, please write to us at: jaindigestpublication@gmail.com Or call or send a message at 310-721-5947.

In Seva,
Dilip Parekh



JAINA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Sadharmiks, Jai Jinendra! Pranam!

Greetings to you all! It is an honor and privilege to address you as the newly appointed President of JAINA for the term 2024-25. I step into this role with immense respect for the legacy built by our dedicated volunteers over the years. As we embark on this journey together, I assure you of our unwavering commitment to elevate JAINA to new heights. The Executive Committee, under my leadership, is dedicated to building upon the strong foundation laid by our predecessors.

This winter season began with a compassionate touch during the Thanksgiving ceremony, departing from the typical festivities involving turkeys' slaughter. On Thanksgiving day, led by Dr. Nitin Shah and the Jain Center of Southern California, the JAINA family distributed 5192 plant-based and Jain meals, saving countless turkeys. This collective effort, executed by 80 dedicated volunteers, extended support to the homeless, neglected, and abused individuals across Southern California in over 25 cities. In addition to meals, the initiative provided sleeping bags to help the homeless face the winter. This remarkable act of kindness and compassion deserves a resounding round of applause.

In a remarkable feat worthy of Anumodana, 69 devoted Yatris from North America embarked on the revered 99 Yatra of Shree Shantrunjay Mahatirth. They also included visits to Girnar and are scheduled for a journey to Sammet Shikahrji in the days ahead. Deep gratitude is extended to the exceptional leadership of Shree Arvind Shah for meticulously planning and executing this spiritual tour.

The winter season is also marked by visits and various activities in India. This year, Shree Bidada Sarovoday Trust, which is deeply involved with various JAINA medical and other humanitarian initiatives in Kutchh and across the world, celebrated its 50th anniversary, which saw a significant participation of dignitaries from the JAINA Family. The second in line was a collaborative gathering at Mumbai, jointly organized by the JAINA India Foundation and sponsored enthusiastically by JITO. The event was addressed by visionary Jain community leaders and drew participation from various social organizations interested in collaborating with JAINA. It was aimed to strengthen ties between JAINA and the local community in India, focusing on youth engagement and overall growth.

Currently, I'm touring India to connect with diverse social and religious organizations, meet various Sadhu Bhagwants, and enhance ties with our new leadership team and the broader JAINA family. I will be attending the 3rd Jain International Conference in Ahmedabad, while my colleague, Shree Atul Shah, will attend the 88th birthday celebration of Acharya Shree Chandana Ji at Veerayatan, Rajgir.

Looking ahead, I am thrilled to announce that the next JAINA Convention is planned for 2025 in Chicago. This gathering will mark a significant chapter in our community engagement, providing a platform for shared learning, collaboration, and celebration.

In the spirit of inclusivity, we aim to foster more open discussions within our community. For any matter concerning our community in North America, please feel free to reach out to me at: bindesh.shah@jaina.org / president@jaina.org. Your valuable feedback is essential, and we encourage your active participation to shape the future of JAINA.

Yours Sincerely,

Bindesh Shah,
JAINA President

A FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM THE PAST PRESIDENT - HARESH SHAH

**Dear Sadharmiks,
Jai Jinendra!**



Serving as President of the Jain Association in North America (JAINA) for the past two years has been a privilege, an honor, and an incredibly rewarding experience. My heart is filled with immense gratitude and a profound sense of fulfillment.

First, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to every member of JAINA. Your unwavering support, dedication, and active participation have been the cornerstone of our success. Your commitment to the values and principles of Jainism has been an inspiration, driving our collective efforts toward unity, progress, and service to humanity.

I extend my deepest appreciation to the Executive Committee, Board of Directors, committee chairs and its members, all JAINA Past-Presidents, and all volunteers who have worked tirelessly alongside with me. Your passion, expertise, and selfless contributions have been instrumental in steering JAINA toward its goals and realizing our shared vision.

I am indebted to the numerous individuals and organizations that collaborated with us, fostering partnerships, and enabling us to broaden our reach and impact. Your collaboration has been invaluable in advancing our mission of promoting Jain values, culture, education, veganism, and community welfare; all in line with the core principle of non-violence and compassionate living. A special thanks to our sponsors and donors whose generous support has enabled us to initiate and sustain numerous programs and initiatives for the betterment of our community and beyond.

I am immensely grateful to the outgoing and incoming leadership teams. Your willingness to take on responsibilities and lead with dedication ensures the continuity of our efforts and the growth of our organization. I have full confidence that JAINA will continue to thrive and reach greater heights under the new leadership,

As my term concludes, I am deeply blessed and indebted to the profound wisdom and guidance bestowed upon us by the revered Guru Bhagwants. Their names resonate as beacons of spiritual enlightenment and wisdom within our community—Acharya Shree Ratnasundar Surishwarji MS, Acharya Shree Chandnaji and Sadhvigan, Muni Shree Jinchandra Vijayji, Kirti Chandra Vijayji (Bandhu Triputi), Acharya Shree Vidhya Sagarji, Muni Shree Praman Sagarji, Acharya Shree Mahasramanji, Acharya Shree Mahabodhi MS, Acharya Uday Vallabh suri swarji,

Namramuni MS, Dhiraj Muni MS, Acharya Lokesh Muni, Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji and many other Guru Bhagawants. Their teachings have illuminated our paths, nurturing our spirits, and guiding us toward greater understanding and compassion. Their blessings and wisdom have been the cornerstone of our endeavors, infusing our community with grace, harmony, and spiritual growth. With heartfelt gratitude, I offer my sincerest thanks for their unwavering blessings and support, which have been instrumental in our collective journey.



Lastly, I express my deepest gratitude to my family for their unwavering support, understanding, and encouragement throughout my tenure. Their sacrifice and encouragement have been the pillar of my strength in fulfilling my responsibilities as President.

As I step down from this esteemed position, I am filled with pride in our collective achievements and the enduring spirit of unity within our community. Here are a few notable events during my term that I would cherish forever:

JAINA Convention 2023

The highlight of our term was the JAINA Convention, a momentous gathering that reunited the vibrant Jain community of North America after a four-year hiatus. This incredible event was a testament to our collective spirit and dedication to our heritage. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the convener of the convention, Shri Bindesh Shah, and the entire organizing team, whose tireless efforts and meticulous planning made this gathering a resounding success. Your commitment to highlighting Jain values, fostering unity, and providing a platform for learning and celebration has left an indelible mark on our community's collective memory. Thank you for your unwavering

dedication and passion in making the JAINA Convention an unforgettable experience for us all.

YJA Convention

The YJA Convention was our opportunity to engage directly with the vibrant youth leadership. It was an honor to address our future leaders, sharing insights, encouragement, and the importance of upholding our cherished values while navigating the complexities of modern life. Interacting with the enthusiastic and motivated youth reaffirmed our belief in the potential of the next generation and the significance of empowering them to carry forth the legacy of our community with pride, integrity, and innovation. I'm thrilled to share that the YJA Convention proudly featured an entirely vegan menu, aligning with the core principles of non-violence and compassionate living.

Winter Programs in India



A defining milestone during our tenure has been the initiation of a closer association with our ancestral homeland through collaborative efforts. We proudly commenced co-hosting a networking conference in Mumbai under the banner of JAINA India Foundation and another under the auspices of Shrutratnakar in Ahmedabad; and participated in eight Winter Programs in India during January 2023, where the JAINA Delegation represented JAINA at various events and networked with other organizations. These significant initiatives signify our commitment to fostering stronger bonds with our roots, facilitating meaningful connections, and nurturing a bridge between the Jain communities in North America and India. This step not only strengthens cultural ties but also opens avenues for shared learning, collaboration, and a deeper understanding of our heritage. We are immensely grateful for the enthusiastic support and participation that have made these events a symbol of unity and harmony across borders.

JAINA Senior Housing Project

A momentous achievement that stands as a testament to our perseverance and dedication is the realization of our long-envisioned Senior Housing Project. Overcoming numerous hurdles, we meticulously pursued this vision, visiting shortlisted sites in Florida multiple times, engaging in extensive discussions with real estate developers, and conducting thorough due diligence. This endeavor, fueled by our commitment to providing a nurturing and supportive environment for our seniors, has now gained significant momentum. Looking ahead, I'm thrilled to announce the establishment of stronger leadership with the involvement of Maheshbhai Wadher, a former JAINA president. His experience and dedication will undoubtedly propel this project forward, ensuring its successful fruition and serving as a beacon of care and comfort for our cherished elders within our community.

Student Guidance Committee

One remarkable stride in our community's support system has been the establishment of a Student Guidance Committee dedicated to aiding students arriving in North America. This committee stands as a beacon of support, offering guidance and assistance to newcomers as they navigate the transition to a new place, providing invaluable advice, resources, and a welcoming environment for their settlement. The committee's commitment to nurturing and aiding young minds not only fosters a smoother integration process but also builds a durable foundation for these students to thrive in their academic pursuits and beyond. I am proud to inform you that during a very short time, this committee has enrolled 500+ host families from our community and provided help to almost 1200 incoming students in North America through them.

Telehealth Committee

Another notable achievement is the formation of a Telehealth Committee, a testament to our commitment to community well-being. Leveraging the expertise within our network of specialist doctors, this committee offers free health services via telemedicine, ensuring accessible healthcare to those within our community. This initiative not only displays the collective dedication of our medical professionals but also serves as a testament to our community's ethos of caring for one another's well-being, transcending physical boundaries to provide essential healthcare services and support. I am proud to inform you that this committee has been able to team up with 50+ specialist doctors for this noble service-oriented project.

Thank you once again for entrusting me with these responsibilities. It has been an incredible journey, and I am humbled, honored, and privileged to have served as your President. I am confident that JAINA will continue to flourish, guided by the principles of Jainism and the collective efforts of its members.

THE UNSTOPPABLE AMITABH SHAH - COMPILED BY JAYANA SHAH

"Charity is the best form of prayer. Do whatever you can to help the not-so-fortunate" - Amitabh Shah

At a fundraising event in Los Angeles in October 2023, a friend of mine introduced me to a gentleman my son's age. "Jayana, meet Amitabh. You two need to spend some time together. You both have similar passion and interest." The minute we started talking, I felt so comfortable as if I had known him for years. I was so impressed by his humility and dedication to Seva that I decided to write an article about him. I read a lot about his achievements at such a young age; but what fascinated me most was his simplicity which came through in all his interviews. He has this amazing ability to convey his message and connect to the audience with both colloquial ease and Ivy league sophistication as the situation demands. He truly believes that inspiration finds you if your eyes are open. His compassion and motivation are innate, and Yuva Unstoppable – the NGO he founded - is a real example of it. I hope this article gives you glimpse in this amazing personality and inspires you as much as it has inspired me.



Driven by a Higher Purpose

The United States of America is known as a country where people from all over the world come to fulfill their dreams of prosperity. However, once in a while we find young ambitious people turn away from the opportunities of a lifetime to make it big in America and use their talents for a higher purpose. Amitabh Shah is one such rare individual.

In 2005, at the young age of 23, after receiving his MBA degree from the prestigious Yale University, Amitabh declined a lucrative Wall Street job offer from JP Morgan. Why? Because he wanted to make a difference in the lives of the people by working on the Real Streets of India. His motivation came from a visit to his childhood Nanny's home. He was saddened by seeing how she was mistreated and neglected. He took care of her and then settled her at an old age home. He had found his higher purpose.

Yuva Unstoppable

Amitabh decided to not return to the US and started an NGO - Yuva Unstoppable - in India to help the senior citizens and the children. His family expressed some concern and suggested that he should do the community work after he has earned money. For the next few months, he took them for multiple visits to old age homes, public schools, and orphanages. These trips helped change their minds and now they are his biggest cheerleaders.

Amitabh started Yuva Unstoppable as a volunteer movement along with a group of zealous individuals as a youth-led and youth-driven organization with an aim to positively change the lives of children and youth in need. He asked people to just give 2 hours of their time every week to go to schools and orphanages and teach any of the school subjects. Thousands of volunteers across India participated in this program.



Amitabh strongly believed that education must assume the highest priority in India's development mission; but through the volunteers, he learned about

alarming shortfalls within the system such as poor sanitation, lack of teaching resources, etc. Yuva decided to transform the lives of less privileged children and youth by maximizing impact in the education sector by focusing on core fundamentals:

- Upgrading basic infrastructure facilities in schools
- Providing access to modern means of teaching-learning
- Developing compassionate and grateful youth who become ambassadors of social change.

Programs

Since its inception in 2005, YUVA has launched several programs:

- School Transformation Program (WASH facilities)
- Education Scholarship Scheme (Udaan)
- Digital Smart Classrooms
- YUVA Ambassadors
- COVID Relief Initiatives
- and several other community-based programs



Impact of the Programs

As of 2023, YUVA is India's premier non-profit which benefits over 7 million vulnerable beneficiaries directly and indirectly including 5000 schools with improved sanitation, play areas, solar panels, drinking water, access to technology, scholarships, nutrition, vaccination, etc. and the journey is unstoppable.

On their website (www.yuvaunstoppable.org), Yuva provides details of how they assess the impact of all their programs on student enrollment, attendance, learning outcome, etc. They have published the results of a case study conducted in 2020 by the London School of Economics & Political Science (LSE) India Observatory.

Yuva Supporters

Yuva's mission and vision have attracted 100+ top institutes to be their partners (UNICEF, Google, United Way, KPMG, Deloitte, IBM, Coke, Reliance, Adani, etc). Yuva is also supported by big philanthropic organizations such as the Gates Foundation.

Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modiji, Late Pres. APJ Kalam, Superstar Akshay Kumar. and Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, Award-winning Directors Rakeysh Mehra and R. Balki; Cricketers VVS Laxman and Sir Ian Botham; Global legends like Author Jeffrey Archer and Paul Polman (Global CEO Unilever) have participated in Yuva initiatives.



With Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi

Actor Ashton Kutcher's A-Plus Media, MFF, and Chicken Soup for the Soul made a 4-minute short film

around how Yuva empowers girls across India by improving toilets and education facilities in schools.

Accolades

Amitabh Shah is a recipient of several awards. Some of the most prestigious awards are:

- International Ellis Island Award at Statue of Liberty in May 2019 - one of the highest awards officially recognized by the House of Representatives and Senate. Previous winners have been Bill Clinton, George Bush, Muhammad Ali, Rosa Parks, Richard Nixon, Mrs. Indra Nooyi, Malala amongst other legends!
- Iconic Youth Award recipient by Rotary International for mobilizing youthful energy & bringing lasting change in education institutions in 2019.
- Recipient of the title of Sri Lankan Peace Ambassador by the Center of Peace Studies in 2018.
- Winner of the 2015 Prince's Prize for Innovative Philanthropy, conferred by HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco wherein Jack Ma of Alibaba Group was a semi-finalist.
- Executive President of the Times of India Foundation (Largest English Daily Globally)
- and many more such accolades

Amitabh Shah – The Motivational Speaker

At Yuva Unstoppable, Amitabh has a very distinctive title - Chief Inspiration Officer (CIO) – which clearly defines the role he wants to play as well as describes what we can take away from his exemplary life. He is a celebrated inspirational speaker on Kindness, Gratitude, and the Power of Self-Belief and has been winning hearts with his presence at Ted Talks, Yale, Wharton, YPO/WPO Forums, and United Way's Million Dollar Roundtable, amongst others.

While searching for information about Amitabh, I came across a YouTube video podcast by Holistic Health – an interview conducted by Shivangi Desai. Here are some gems I picked up from that candid conversation:

- Definition of Seva – To surrender yourself at the feet of the Divine and tell the Divine “Use my body and mind for your work and for the good you want to do.”

- In addition to doing physical Seva to help others, “*Mansa Seva*” is also important where you help people to become emotionally stronger.
- Don't make your relationships a transaction like is fundraising; instead, focus on “friend raising” with your genuine interest in adding value to their life.
- To be able to help others be happy, you yourself need to be happy and emotionally strong.
- About his biggest desire, Amitabh said “To be purer, to increase my positive vibrations and be more loving”

Amitabh has done wonders with his NGO but in everyday life also he tends to be a considerate and compassionate person. Whether he is talking with a CEO or a security guard, he treats them equally with love and respect. One of the incidents to be mentioned here is about how he helped an old couple from a rural area during their first flight. Amitabh saw them on one of his travels and helped them settle in their seats. He later realized that the couple was hungry but did not have enough money to buy a meal. He paid for their meals and beverages and asked the staff to tell the old couple that it was complimentary. Such simple acts of kindness can help gauge his compassion quotient.

The entire process of researching and writing this article has enriched my life in a beautiful way. In this day and age, it is indeed surprising to see a person move from Wall Street to Real Streets by choice because he decided to follow his heart and dedicate his life to Seva.

Amitabh says “Many people give donations for worthy causes. In my case, my parents gave me as a donation (to the society).” I bow down to his and all parents who continue to instill our values and *Sanskar* in the younger generation.

References:

- <https://yuvaunstoppable.org>
- <https://amitabhshah.com>
- From Wall Street to Serving Millions in India | Amitabh Shah Yuva Unstoppable | Shivangi Desai <https://bit.ly/47Bh9Ww>

HUMBLLED BY KINDNESS

By DR. ADITI MATHUR



Dr. Aditi Mathur Simlote is a Dentist, an entrepreneur, and a mother of two children. She was born in Jaipur, India and migrated to US in 2008. Being an avid reader and an amateur writer since her early school years, Aditi has always enjoyed meeting like-minded people. She is proud to be an optimist and believes in spreading hope, joy and positivity through her actions and writing. This article might be considered as her introduction to her upcoming blogs which are a collection of her experience as a mother of a special kid. Email : mathuraditi06@gmail.com

“Not all storms come to disrupt your life, some come to clear your path” - Paulo Coelho - The Mindset Journey

Some tales are best introduced with a prelude, a gentle invitation for hearts to embrace the poignant essence within. Being able to write down such a story and share such emotions on a big platform is a blessing, one that wears no disguise. In today’s world, it is easy to submerge ourselves in a race to acquire our materialistic ambitions, causing many to overlook the importance of showcasing our most innate feelings. In fact looking at the big picture, destiny, and its workings can seem like an enigma, a phenomenon beyond human control. But despite all the negativities and all the uncertainties, I have never been more sure about the law of attraction. It has been seven years since the traumatic birth of my son, but all the difficulties have only reaffirmed my faith that kindness begets kindness. The humane aspect of humanity supersedes all worldly aspirations.

Our story which seems on the outside like the story of two parents whose lives were overthrown at the birth of their son, is essentially the story of regaining trust in humanity. In December 2016, my husband and I were leading the quintessential Indian American life as an Engineer – Doctor couple. Our uneventful, but very “normal” life received the jolt like a big Californian earthquake when our child was born. Our precious little one was born with a rare condition that didn’t even allow him to breathe on his own. The next two months passed as a blur, and we found ourselves to be engulfed with numerous tests and consultations with the doctors, just to make sense of what was happening to our baby. Seeing their newborn covered with tubes and machines

is one of the worst possible traumas that parents could undergo. Along with the emotional trauma, there were other practical difficulties that we had to navigate, like finding a decent place to stay near the hospital.

But God with his abundance of kindness sent us a special stranger whose compassion made this journey bearable and eventually even hopeful. A mother, whose own kid had been sick in the Natal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) a few years before had made a vow to serve other parents who were undergoing the same suffering as she did. She made periodic visits to the hospital with the sole intention of providing moral support and cheer for the parents and families of kids in the hospital. She lent us her infinitely patient listening ear and filled us with hope and joy by sharing her story of overcoming her daughter’s sickness. She told us to embrace the situation with pride and love by clicking pictures of our baby every day and recording the entire experience. We took the first picture of our then 12-day-old son and we just got hooked on making memories since then. This proved to be one of the best coping strategies, as of this date, we look at what our family, and especially our baby has been through, and how we came out of this stronger than before. Moving on to the practical difficulties, our God-sent angel informed us about a place to stay nearby which is specially built for the families of kids being treated in that area. We went and put in our application for a long-term stay and fortunately, we got a room the following day. I cannot even imagine what would have happened if we had not met this

lady that day. The lady and her infinite compassion is what made it possible for us to not just get through those days, but do it with a sense of hope and joy. With our hearts still brimming with gratitude for that lady's all-encompassing love, we try to pass on her kindness at every chance possible.

In my experience, a good doctor with an innate instinct to be considerate to other's difficulties becomes an excellent medical practitioner. The real ray of hope during the entire ordeal was the wonderful NICU doctor who was not only knowledgeable and invested in finding a diagnosis, but her kindness was commendable. She stood by us and fought with the system to make sure that all the specialists needed were there in the diagnosis review team. Another important person in my ordeal is a doctor who has been my dear friend since my school days. She is a pediatrician in New York and stood by me like a rock right after I told her about my son's birth. She was there every day when I was broken, helpless, and lost. She had memorized every possible test result, medication, or any part of the treatment plan for my son over the next few weeks. It brings a smile to my face thinking she was the audiobook version of my son's medical history. She helped me get in touch with every possible medical facility/doctor in the US and India. Her guidance in making decisions and finding materials to read and research about any possible diagnosis or tests related to my son's signs and symptoms was God-sent. As a parent of a child who needs a lot of medical attention, any act of compassion from friends or strangers goes a long way and we are blessed to have that support from her even today.

One of the incidents I would like to share is about how a small gesture can make a simple cup of coffee feel like a hug full of warmth. It was winter and unexpectedly one of the nights it was raining cats and dogs in Los Angeles, which of course is not a common phenomenon. The rains have the

unique quality of bringing both joy and sadness with it and we unfortunately felt immense emotional gloominess while in the waiting room at the hospital. Around 10 pm one of our friends called and asked us to come downstairs to the main lobby. When my husband and I reached there, we saw our friends holding 4 cups of coffee with sincere smiles on their faces. No real words were exchanged for some time but the moment we hugged, there was this genuine exchange of emotions that can never be expressed in words. They had an eleven-month-old baby at home at that time and even after working for the entire day, they made this trip without any expectations just to bring a smile to our faces. We are so grateful and thankful for all these people in our lives.

In retrospect, our personal journey to understand compassion and positive interactions started before our son was born. It was not a very easy pregnancy for me but just the excitement of having the second bundle of joy and a sibling for our daughter made the difficult journey bearable. I still remember a wonderful gesture shown by our community members. A group of moms from our daughter's school came home with gifts and celebrated a surprise baby shower for me when I couldn't get out for weeks. One of those friends volunteered to drop our daughter home after school for months as her contribution to making our life a little easier. Our bond strengthened and we became friends from mere acquaintances only because this group of people had innate compassion and kindness. When my son was a year old, and I could take him along to pick up my daughter, this entire set of parents, teachers, and school staff, who did not even know us, made it so natural by simply being considerate and accommodating and praying for our family.

Our voyage to health is still on and we are blessed to have an amazing group of healthcare professionals, therapists, teachers, and friends around us. We have been humbled and eternally grateful!

"I would rather make mistakes in kindness and compassion than work miracles in unkindness and hardness"

- Mother Teresa

ENGAGED JAINISM: THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF ACHARYA SUSHIL KUMAR¹

By COGEN BOHANEK, MA, PhD



Cogen Bohanec is an Assistant Professor in Sanskrit and Jain Studies at Arihanta Institute where he teaches Sanskrit language, and Jain philosophy and literature. He is a Visiting Assistant Professor at Claremont School of Theology (CST), and he has taught numerous classes on South Asian Religions and Sanskrit at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley. Dr. Bohanec specializes in comparative dharma traditions, philosophy of religion, and Sanskrit language and literature, and has numerous publications in those areas. He has a PhD in "Historical and Cultural Studies of Religion" with an emphasis in Hindu Studies from GTU, and he also holds an MA in Buddhist Studies from the Institute of Buddhist Studies at GTU.

Ācārya Suśīl Kumār (aka Sushil Kumar, 1926-1994), who is affectionately referred to as "Guruji" by his followers, was a mendicant leader of the Jain Śvetāmbara Sthānakavāsī tradition. Apart from being perhaps one of the most revered Jain monks of the twentieth century, he is also notable for having traveled globally to teach the social and spiritual messages of the Jain tradition while forming alliances with many Jain and non-Jain religious leaders, as well as for working with many non-religious leaders to address the world's pressing social issues.



Guruji, whose birth name was Sardar Singh, was born into a Hindu brahmin family on June 15, 1926, in the village of Shikhopur (aka Sushil Garh, Haryana, India). Even at the young age of seven he was so spiritually inclined that he left home and traveled to Jagraon (Punjab) to meet with and receive instruction from his Guru, a Jain monk by the name of Muni Chotelāl (aka Chhote Lal). Before he was even eight years of age, he had already begun living as an

ascetic under the guidance of Muni Chotelāl, learning the various languages of Jain texts (e.g. Prakrit and Sanskrit) and displaying an amazing propensity to memorize many of the major Jain scriptures.

At this young age Guruji began a practice that would become a signature of his teachings, namely the recitation of, and contemplation upon, the Namokāra Mahāmantra. As he learned to develop and awaken the powers of the mantra, he eventually came to develop it into the Arhum (or Arhaṃ) Yoga system of meditation, which is based on ancient Jain teachings and practices, believed to encompass all Jain teachings. Arhum Yoga is believed to eventually give the practitioner a direct experience (*pratyakṣa*) of reality beyond our mundane perceptions based on inaccurate mental constructions. He would later write that, "Arhaṃ yoga is a combination of Jñāna Yoga and Haṭha Yoga" where,

"In Haṭha Yoga first you have to control your Prāṇa. By Prāṇa you control your mind. When by Prāṇa you are controlling your senses, your mind, your intellect, your consciousness. That is Haṭha Yoga. Haṭha Yogi finds Reality through: devotion; practice; control; concentration; service."²

Also at a very young age, Sardar Singh had begun to experience visions of a deceased monk, Muni Roop Chand, during his meditations in Jagraon (Punjab). During these visions Muni Roop Chand began to instruct him on Jain philosophy, and requested that he become a full renunciate, initiated as a monk. The young Sardar Singh began to consider Roop Chand Muni as his guru, and later described one conversation with Muni Roop Chand in his meditative vision as follows:

¹ Some of the sources quoted in this article contain typos, inconsistent editorial decisions, and other errors, but I have quoted them directly as they appear in the sources.

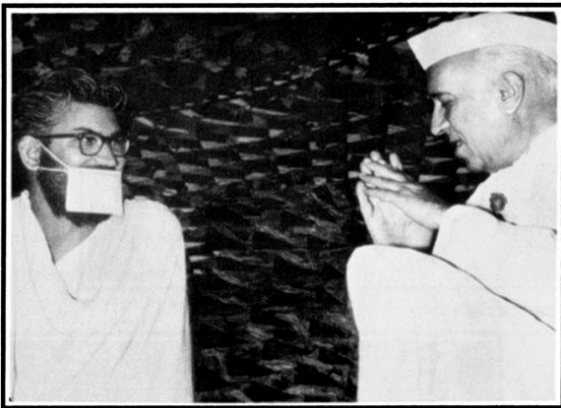
² Ācārya Suśīl Kumār, 1995. *Appāṇaṃ Vosirāmī*. Canada: Acharya Sushil Publications Trust. 27, 29.

“He [Muni Roop Chand] said, ‘You become a monk.’ I accepted. ‘Fine, I will become a monk. To become a monk is very simple thing. But, monkhood is very difficult to follow.’ He said, ‘I will be with you. I will stay with you. Do not worry about it. Anytime you call me, I will be there.’³

Sardar Singh requested Muni Chotelāl to bless him in his initiation as a monk. After further obtaining permission from his parents, he was initiated in Jagraon as Muni Sushil Kumar (Suśīl Kumār) on April 20, 1942, when he was only fifteen years of age.

His intense spiritual practice and mastery of spiritual teachings continued after this at a rapid pace, and he even earned various academic degrees in religion, literature, and history.⁴ He writes about the importance of his connection to the guru with regards to his signatory practice of mantra,

“Mantra cannot work without Guru. The Guru center on the top of your head and outside Guru have to combine. Guru can give the power by śakti-pāṭ. When Guru is telling you to recite the Mantra, that time you are not just reciting a Mantra. You are also getting the power from Guru. That Mantra will work.”⁵



With India’s 1st Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

Moreover, Ācārya Suśīl Kumār began to achieve some renown as an orator and a peripatetic teacher, walking an estimated sixty thousand miles all over India, as is required by the vows of Jain monkhood, teaching not only the Jain tradition, but also addressing a variety of other social concerns such as

vegetarianism, animal welfare, environmentalism, and interfaith peacebuilding as he traveled. His talks began to attract attendees in the thousands. As he progressed, his approach to spirituality became increasingly dynamic, socially active, and engaged. It has been written by one of his disciples that,

“His dynamic spiritual leadership opened up a dimension which had for past several centuries laid dormant under the inertia of tradition. This was the dimension of activism.”⁶

By the 1950s Gurujī had become increasingly famous as a preeminent religious teacher of Indian traditions. With this more “engaged” approach to the Jain tradition, he established the “first World Religions Conference in New Delhi, where people of all faiths from around the world participated” and eventually “organized six more successful World Religions Conferences in the subsequent twenty years.”⁷ From one UN report, these conferences, “have been addressed by presidents and prime ministers of India and major religious leaders, among them the Dalai Lama.”⁸



With Dalai Lama

By 1975 Gurujī had moved even further beyond the “inertia of tradition” and transcended Jain monastic norms by “prompting the use of harmless technologies (such as microphones and electric lights)” which were controversial amongst Jain ascetics. Moreover, he was beginning to use

³ Ācārya Suśīl Kumār, 1998. *When I was Fourteen or Fifteen*. A transcript based on a discourse in June, 1984. Blairstown, NJ: International Mahavir Jain Mission, 12.

⁴ Parveen Jain. 2019. *An Introduction to Jain Philosophy: Based on the Writings and Discourses by Ācārya Sushil Kumar*. Delhi: D.K. Jain Publications, 11.

⁵ Ibid. 1995, 44.

⁶ Unknown Author. 1995. Appendix to *Appāṇaṃ Vosirāmī*. Canada: Acharya Sushil Publications Trust.

⁷ Ibid. Parveen Jain, xvii.

⁸ *UN Observer & International Report*, Oct. 1991, cited in Suśīl Kumār, 1995, 100-101.

mechanized vehicles and eventually flew to the United States on June 17, 1975. While this seemed to go against the tradition, it is noteworthy that “Guruji received blessings and tacit support from Jain and non-Jain monks and *ācāryas* for success in this remarkable endeavor,” support which was evidenced by the fact that on April 21, 1982 he received the title of “Jain *Ācārya*” from *Ācārya Amar Muni (Kaviji)* with the president of India in attendance.⁹

With perhaps a more “engaged” approach to the Jain tradition than what was practiced by most Jain mendicants, he “worked with several universities of the world to start offering courses on Jain philosophy... he helped secure a permanent representation of Jains on the global platform at the United Nations,” and in 1983 he “inspired the founding of Siddhachalam in New Jersey (United States) as “a profound and everlasting center of pilgrimage (*tīrtha*) outside of India.”¹⁰ It became the “headquarters for the World Fellowship of Religions, which he founded in the 1950s to promote unity and understanding among world religions.” It was also the center for the “International Mahavir Jain mission, which he established in 1978 to spread the teachings of Jainism,” an organization that became affiliated in with the United Nations in 1992¹¹ (as a non-governmental organization, NGO).

Beyond this, *Ācārya Suśīl Kumār* is notable for attending a variety of international conferences such as the World Parliament of Religions in 1993, the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the Global Forum in 1993 in Kyoto, Japan (Wiley 2009, 207-208). During a 1982 peace rally in New York, he presented the Secretary-General of the U.N. (Javier Perez de Cuellar) “with the Jainist plan and plea for nonviolence” where approximately one million people “marched in support of the U.N. Conference on Disarmament” where “the Jain delegation from India was among the largest.”¹²

On April 22, 1994, at the age of sixty-seven Guruji departed this world while residing at his ashram in New Delhi and while sitting in a “meditative state sitting in lotus posture.”¹³ Even beyond his life on this planet he continues to inspire international efforts to

spread the teachings of non-violence and Jain Dharma, for example, with the recent establishment of the Arihanta Institute of Jain Studies in 2021 by Parveen Jain, a devoted disciple of *Ācārya Suśīl Kumār*, which is an educational institute and university that has students matriculating from diverse countries and cultures internationally.

The message of Guruji’s life that he conveyed so vocally, publicly, and even internationally cannot be mistaken. As he said during 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro,

“We must choose between violence and non-violence. We can only select one of the two. We cannot have both. Man must accept non-violence now or he will destroy himself and all life on earth. How do we promote non-violence? One must first practice the principles of non-violence in one’s own life before we preach it to others... If others are suffering and are in pain, then one cannot remain aloof.... Our own happiness depends upon the happiness of others.”¹⁴

His engaged spirituality, the realization of the connection between personal liberation and social liberation, is ultimately what inspired his immense courage when transcending religious, social, and cultural boundaries in his effort to inspire the world with the teachings of Jain Dharma. Clearly his strength and courage derived from his realization of the central principle of *ahiṃsā*, a principle that we might sum up in one of his most concise adages:

“Non-violence means you are not prepared to kill. You are prepared to die.”¹⁵

In honor of the spirit of Guruji’s life and teachings, we might ask ourselves, “are we prepared to give our lives to make this world more non-violent?” Hopefully, one day we will have the courage to answer “yes,” with honesty and conviction. Until then, may we be ever inspired by the edifying life of *Ācārya Suśīl Kumār*, Guruji to all of humanity.

⁹ Ibid. Parveen Jain, xvi-xviii.

¹⁰ Ibid. Parveen Jain, xviii

¹¹ Kristi L. Wiley, 2009. *The A to Z of Jainism*. Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 207-208.

¹² Ibid. *UN Observer & International Report*, 89.

¹³ Ibid. Parveen Jain, xix

¹⁴ *Ācārya Suśīl Kumār* 1994. *Non-violence Environment and World Peace*. Delhi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 84.

¹⁵ Ibid. 1994, 42.



Dr. Ramjan Hasaniya

સિદ્ધ, સાધક અને સાધનાનું મહિમાગાન : શ્રી નવકાર મંત્ર

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શ્રી નવકાર મંત્રના નામે પ્રસિદ્ધ નમસ્કાર મહામંત્ર કે જે જૈન દર્શનનો પ્રમુખ મંત્ર ગણાય છે. એનું મહિમાગાન શાસ્ત્રકારોથી લઈને વર્તમાનકાળે થયેલા વિદ્વાન અભ્યાસુઓ સુધી અનેકાનેકે કર્યું છે. નવકાર એક નાનકડું મધુર કાવ્ય છે. મેં અહીં આ અદ્ભુત કવિતાને એક નાનકડા ભાવકની નજરથી યથાસમજ ઉકેલવાનો પ્રયત્ન કર્યો છે. થોડા જુદા અર્થસંદર્ભમાં થયેલી શ્રી નમસ્કાર મહામંત્રની આ વાત આપને ગમશે તેવી શ્રદ્ધા છે.

સૌથી પહેલી વાત એ કે નવકાર મંત્ર એ પદ્મશ્રી ડૉ. કુમારપાળ દેસાઈ તેમજ જાણીતા વક્તા જય વસાવડા નોંધે છે તેમ વૈશ્વિક-મંત્ર એટલે કે Global Prayer બની શકે એવો મંત્ર છે. એનું એક સૌથી મોટું કારણ એ છે કે આ મંત્રમાં કોઈ વ્યક્તિ વિશેષને નમસ્કાર નથી પરંતુ ગુણ વિશેષને કે પછી ગુણ ગ્રહણ કર્યા પછી મેળવેલા સ્થાન-વિશેષને અહીં વંદન કરાયા છે. કોઈપણ ધર્મ કે સંપ્રદાયને આપણે જોઈશું તો ખ્યાલ આવશે કે લગભગ મોટાભાગના ધર્મ કોઈને કોઈ ઇષ્ટદેવ કે ભગવાનની સ્તુતિ કરે છે. એમની નામકરણપૂર્વક સ્તુતિ કરે છે એટલે એ સ્તુતિ, વંદના કે નમસ્કાર જે તે વ્યક્તિ કે દેવ-દેવી પૂરતા મર્યાદિત થઈ જાય છે. અહીં આ બંધન નથી. જગતનો કોઈ પણ જીવાત્મા કે જેમણે આ સિદ્ધિ હાંસલ કરી છે, સાધુતાને હાંસલ કરી છે; જ્ઞાન અર્જિત કરી ઉપાધ્યાય પદ મેળવ્યું છે; આચારશુદ્ધિ કરી આચાર્ય બન્યા છે; સ્વયં સિદ્ધ બન્યા છે કે રાગ-દ્વેષથી પર થઈને તીર્થંકર પદને વર્યા છે તેવાં સઘળાં આત્માઓને કોઈપણ પ્રકારના ધર્મ, ક્ષેત્ર, જાતિ વગેરેના બાધ વગર અહીં ભાવપૂર્વક વંદન કરાયાં છે. એટલે અહીં જૈન ધર્મના લેબલ વિના આપણે જો સમજવાની કોશિશ કરીશું તો ખ્યાલ આવશે કે અહીં તો જગતના શ્રેષ્ઠ આત્માઓને વંદન છે. અધ્યાત્મપથના તમામ યાત્રિકોને વંદન છે. આ માર્ગના પરમ પથિકોને વંદન છે. એટલે કોઈપણ ધર્મની અથવા જાતિ-દેશ-વર્ણની વ્યક્તિ હોય પણ આધ્યાત્મિક વિકાસના માર્ગે પ્રગતિશીલ હોય કે પ્રતિષ્ઠિત હોય એ વંદનીય. વળી, અહીં પદ કરતાં પણ એ પદ માટે જરૂરી જે ગુણ છે એ ગુણ જેમણે અર્જિત કર્યા છે એમને વંદન છે. પદનું નામ તો વ્યવસ્થા ખાતર છે. મૂળતઃ તો એ ગુણો જેમણે અર્જિત કર્યા છે એ બધાને વંદન છે અને એ સંદર્ભમાં વિશ્વના કોઈ પણ ધર્મને આ મંત્રને સ્વીકારતા બાધ ન હોવો જોઈએ.

એક બીજી વાત જે સૌથી અગત્યની મને લાગી છે તે એ કે અહીં થઈ ગયેલા પંચ-પરમેષ્ઠીને વંદન છે, વર્તમાન પરમેષ્ઠીને વંદન છે એ તો ખરું જ. એ સ્વાભાવિક પણ લાગે, પરંતુ આ મંત્રની એક ખાસ વિશેષતા કે જેનું તમામ જૈન-શાસ્ત્રો સમર્થન કરે છે તે એ છે કે અહીં ભવિષ્યમાં થનાર અરિહંત, સિદ્ધ, આચાર્ય, ઉપાધ્યાય કે સાધુ પણ વંદનીય છે. આ વાત બહુ જ મજાની અને આપીર્વાગ એટલા માટે લાગે છે કેમકે થનાર તો કોઈપણ હોઈ શકે ! ગમે એટલો દુરાત્મા લાગતો જીવ પણ ભવિષ્યમાં આ પદ હાંસલ કરી શકે ! એટલે મજાની વાત એ થાય છે કે નવકારને સમજીને જે કોઈ વ્યક્તિ એનો જાપ કરે છે તે વ્યક્તિ સૌને પ્રેમ અને મૈત્રીથી જોતો થઈ જાય છે. એને કોઈના પ્રત્યે દ્વેષ આવી જ ન શકે, કેમકે જેના પ્રત્યે દ્વેષ કરે એ પણ આ પૂજ્ય શ્રેણીમાં આવી શકે છે. એટલે નવકારનો સાધક આપોઆપ જગતમિત્ર બની જાય છે. એનો કોઈ શત્રુ રહેતો જ નથી. એ અજાતશત્રુ બની જાય છે. આપણા ભક્તકવિ નરસિંહ મહેતા એમની બહુ પ્રસિદ્ધ કવિતા "વૈષ્ણવજન"માં વૈષ્ણવજન કેવો હોય એની જે

લાક્ષણિકતાઓ દર્શાવે છે એમાં આ જ વિચારને ટેકો આપતાં ગાય છે કે, 'સકળ લોકમાં સહુને વંદે, નિંદા ન કરે કેની રે.' આ રીતે પ્રેમ અને મૈત્રીથી વાસિત થયેલ નવકારનો આરાધક સ્વયં પણ ગુણવિકાસના પગથિયાં ચડે છે.

આ મંત્રમાં ભવિષ્યમાં થનાર ઉત્તમ જીવાત્માઓને વંદન કરાયા છે એનો આધાર આપણને સાંપડે છે નમોત્યુણં સુત્રમાંથી. નમોત્યુણં સુત્રના અંતે આપણે બોલીએ છીએ કે, ' જે અઇઆ સિધ્ધા જે અ ભવિસ્સંતિ ણાગએ કાલે સંપઈ અ વટ્ટમાણા સવ્વે તિવિહેણ વંદામિ.' જૈન દર્શનના ઔદાર્યની, એની ઉદારતાની આ પરાકાષ્ટા છે. કોઈને પ્રશ્ન થાય કે ભગવાન મહાવીરને ચંડકૌશિક કે ગોશાળા પ્રત્યે પણ પ્રેમ જ કેમ જાગે છે ? તેમના હૃદયમાંથી સર્વ જીવો પ્રત્યે અનહદ પ્રેમ જ કેમ વહે છે ? એનું કારણ અહીં છે. એ તીર્થંકર છે, એ તો ખરું. પ્રેમના સાગર છે એ પણ ખરું, પણ આ વાતની પણ અહીં પુષ્ટિ મળે છે કે ભગવાન મહાવીર એ ચંડકૌશિકમાં કે ગોશાળામાં ભવિષ્યનો પૂર્ણ આત્મા જુએ છે. ભવિષ્યનો સિદ્ધાત્મા જુએ છે, ભવિષ્યનો મુક્તાત્મા જુએ છે. એટલે નવકારનો જાપ કરતા-કરતા આ વાત હૃદયમાં ઘૂંટવાની જરૂર છે, જીવનમાં ઉતારવાની જરૂર છે. જગતના જીવમાત્ર પ્રત્યે પ્રેમ પ્રગટે ત્યારે જ નવકારનું રટણ ચરિતાર્થ થઈ શકે છે.

નવકારની અન્ય એક વિશેષતા એ લાગે છે કે અહીં માત્ર પરમધામે પહોંચેલા અરિહંત કે સિદ્ધ ભગવંતોને જ વંદન નથી કરાયા પરંતુ આ માર્ગ પર જે ચાલી રહ્યા છે, જે હજુ પહોંચ્યા નથી પણ આપણાથી આગળ છે એવા અધ્યાત્મમાર્ગના પથિક આચાર્ય ભગવંત, ઉપાધ્યાય ભગવંત અને સાધુ-સાધ્વી ભગવંતોને પણ અહીં વંદન કરાયા છે. નવકાર મંત્રની, કહો કે જૈન દર્શનની આ બહુ મોટી વિશેષતા ગણાવી શકાય કે અહીં અધ્યાત્મમાર્ગના પથિક પ્રત્યે પણ એટલું જ બહુમાન દર્શાવાયું છે. સામાન્ય રીતે રેસમાં વિજેતા થાય તેનું અભિવાદન કરવામાં આવે, અહીં તો પ્રત્યેક દોડવીરને વંદન છે. એનું કારણ એ છે કે જૈન-દર્શનમાં માર્ગનો મહિમા કરાયો છે. જે કોઈ આ માર્ગ ઉપર પગ માંડે તે વંદનીય થઈ જાય. આ પ્રકારનો આરાધક પ્રત્યેનો બહુમાન, સાધક પ્રત્યેનો બહુમાન આપણને બીજે ક્યાંય ખાસ જોવા નથી મળતો. બધે જ પ્રાપ્તિ પછી અભિવાદન છે, જ્યારે અહીં પ્રાપ્તિની દિશામાં પગ માંડ્યા ત્યારથી અભિવાદન તો છે જ પણ સાથોસાથ હૃદયપૂર્વકનો અહોભાવ પણ છે. આ પ્રકારે સાધકમાત્ર પ્રત્યેનો અહોભાવ નવકાર મંત્રને સાધનાનું મૂલ્ય કરતા મંત્ર તરીકે પ્રસ્થાપિત કરે છે.

નવકારના પ્રથમ બે પદમાં એટલે કે 'નમો અરિહંતાણં' અને 'નમો સિદ્ધાણં'માં અરિહંત અને સિદ્ધ એ દેવતત્વને વંદન કરાયા છે. પછીના ત્રણ જે પદ છે- 'નમો આચરિયાણં', 'નમો ઉવજ્જાયાણં' અને 'નમો લોએ સવ્વસાહુણં'- એમાં આચાર્ય, ઉપાધ્યાય અને સાધુ ભગવંતના રૂપે ગુરુતત્વને વંદન કરાયા છે અને 'સવ્વ પાવ પણાસણો, મંગલાણં ચ સવ્વેસિં, પઢમં હવઇ મંગલમ્'માં ધર્મતત્વની વંદના કરાઈ છે. એટલે નવકાર મંત્રમાં દેવ, ગુરુ અને ધર્મ ત્રણેય તત્વને સમાવિષ્ટ કરી લેવામાં આવ્યા છે. ત્રણેયની વંદના અહીં નમસ્કાર મહામંત્રમાં ગર્ભિત છે.

આપણે સૌ કોમ્યુટરના યુગમાં જીવીએ છીએ. કમ્પ્યુટરના આ યુગમાં આપણે શોર્ટકટ-કી વાપરીએ છીએ. મને એમ થાય છે કે અગણિત શ્રેષ્ઠતમ આત્માઓને વંદન કરવાની શોર્ટ કટ કી છે આ નવકાર મંત્ર. આ મંત્રનો કેટલો મોટો ઉપકાર કે તેના ભાવપૂર્વકના રટણ માત્રથી આપણી ભાવ-ચેતના આ અસંખ્ય શ્રેષ્ઠતમ જીવાત્માઓ સાથે અનુસંધિત થઈ જાય છે. આવી ભાવનાથી નવકારનો જંપ કરતા રુવાડાં ઊભા થઈ જશે. પ્રતિક્રમણ, પૂજા આદિ ક્રિયામાં ચૈત્યવંદન કરતી વેળાએ ભાવક જ્યારે 'જંકિચિ' સૂત્ર બોલે છે ત્યારે 'જાઈ જિણ બિંબાઈ તાઈ સવ્વાઈ વંદામિ' બોલતાં એટલો બધો રોમાંચ થાય છે કે, આહા ! જગતના તમામ જિનબિંબોને એક સાથે વંદન થઈ ગયા ! શબ્દની આ અસીમ કૃપા નવકારમાં પણ ગર્ભિત છે. નવકાર બોલતા આપણી ચેતના સમગ્ર બ્રહ્માંડના શ્રેષ્ઠ આત્માઓ સાથે જોડાય છે એ ભાવે જ્યારે આપણે નવકારનો જાપ કરીશું તો એનો ખરો રોમાંચ આપણે પણ માણી શકીશું.

વ્યવહારમાં સામાન્ય રીતે ચડતા ક્રમમાં વાત આવતી હોય છે. અહીં ઉતરતા ક્રમમાં વંદન છે. સૌથી ઉત્કૃષ્ટ

અરિહંત પરમાત્માથી માંડીને આપણી નિકટના કે જેમના પ્રત્યક્ષ દર્શન સુલભ છે એવા સાધુ-સાધ્વી ભગવંતોને વંદના કરાઈ છે. આ અવતરણ પણ એક પ્રકારે અવતારકૃત્ય જ લાગે. દૂરથી નજીક આવી જે નજીક છે એનો આશ્રય લઈ દૂર સુધી મીરાંની ભાષામાં કહીએ તો ઠેક સુધી પહોંચવા નવકાર આપણને પ્રેરે છે. આ મંત્ર કાર્યસિદ્ધિ માટેનો નહિ પણ પુરુષાર્થ પ્રગટાવવા માટેનો મંત્ર છે. આપણને આ મંત્રનો જાપ કરતા બળ મળે છે. એક વિશ્વાસ અને ધરપત મળે છે કે જો આ બધા જીવાત્માઓ પહોંચ્યા તો હું પણ પહોંચીશ. જૈન ધર્મને શ્રમણ ધર્મ આ સંદર્ભમાં જ કહ્યો છે. નવકાર મંત્રમાં આવો આંતરિક શ્રમ કરનાર જ સ્થાન પામે છે એટલું જ નહીં પણ આ મંત્ર આપણને સૌને પણ આંતર શ્રમ કરવા માટે પ્રેરે છે.

મંત્રના આરંભે આવતો 'નમો' શબ્દ પણ ઘણો જ સૂચક છે. આ મંત્ર ઝુકતા શીખવે છે. ચીનના બહુ મોટા સંત લાઓત્સેએ કહ્યું છે કે, 'ઝુકવું એ સુરક્ષાનો ઉપાય.' આપણા પ્રાચીન મંદિરોમાં ગભારાના એટલે કે ગર્ભગૃહના દરવાજા નીચા એટલા માટે જ રાખવામાં આવતા હતા કે લોકોને ઝુકવાની ટેવ પડે. કારણ કે નમ્રતા એ અધ્યાત્મની પ્રથમ શરત છે. મધ્યકાળમાં થઈ ગયેલા સંત કવયિત્રી ગંગાસતી કહે છે તેમ, 'ભક્તિ રે કરવી એણે રાંક થઈને રહેવું પાનબાઈ, મેલવું અંતરનું અભિમાન રે.' મજાની વાત એ પણ છે કે દેવ, ગુરુ અને ધર્મ પ્રત્યેનો આ ઝુકાવ તેમના ભણી લઈ જાય છે. જેણે ઊગવું છે એણે પ્રથમ દટાવવું પડે છે. હું'પણાનો ત્યાગ થાય ત્યારે જ તો અધ્યાત્મની યાત્રા આરંભાય છે. 'નમો' શબ્દમાં સમર્પિતતા ગર્ભિત છે. એક જાણીતી કવિતા છે- 'રે શિર સાટે નટવરને વરીએ.' બીજી એક કવિતામાં કહ્યું છે કે, 'માથા સાટે મોંઘી વસ્તુ સાંપડવી નહિ સહેલ જોને'- આ માર્ગની અંતિમ ઉપલબ્ધિ માટે સૌથી પહેલા પોતાના હું'પણાને ઓગાળી દેવું પડે છે. નવકારથી આ રીતે અધ્યાત્મમાર્ગનો એકડો ઘૂંટાય છે.

નવકારના જાપ માટે આરાધકની પાત્રતા પણ એટલી જ આવશ્યક છે. કોઈપણ સૂત્ર એ સ્વયં પરિપૂર્ણ છે; મહાશક્તિમાન છે, પણ એનો પ્રયોગ કરનાર એને પ્રયોજવા માટે કેટલો સમર્થ છે એના પર પણ એની કાર્યસિદ્ધિનો મદાર રહે છે. કોઈપણ તીર ગમે એટલું ધારદાર કે મજબૂત હોય પણ એના ઉત્તમ પ્રયોગ માટે એટલા જ ઉત્તમ ધનુષ્યની પણ આવશ્યકતા રહે છે તેમ ગમે એટલો ઉત્તમ મંત્ર હોય પણ એના ઉત્તમ આરાધક વિના અધૂરો છે.

કોઈ પણ મંત્ર જાપ માટે શ્રદ્ધાનું તત્વ પણ એટલું જ અનિવાર્ય છે. જો શ્રદ્ધા હોય તો જ અને માત્ર તો જ મંત્રનો પ્રયોગ શક્તિમાન બને છે. એક નાનકડી બાળાની વાર્તા બહુ જાણીતી છે. વાત એમ છે કે, એક ગામમાં વર્ષો સુધી દુષ્કાળની સ્થિતિ રહે છે. આખરે ગ્રામજનો ભેગા મળીને પ્રાર્થના કરવાનો નિર્ણય કરે છે. સૌ સમૂહમાં પ્રાર્થના કરવા માટે ઘરેથી નીકળે છે ત્યારે એક નાનકડી બાળા છત્રી લઈને નીકળે છે. કોઈ એને હસીને પૂછે છે કે, 'કેમ બેટા તે છત્રી કેમ સાથે લીધી છે ? ત્યારે એ નાનકડી અને નિર્દોષ, શ્રદ્ધાથી તરબતર એવી બાળા જવાબ આપે છે કે, 'કેમ ? આપણે પ્રાર્થના કરીશું એટલે વરસાદ તો પડશે જ ને ! અને વરસાદ પડે ને હું ભીંજાઈ ન જાઉં એટલે મેં છત્રી સાથે રાખી છે.' કહેવાનો તાત્પર્ય એટલો જ છે કે પ્રાર્થના કરવા માટે તો બધા જ ભેગા થયા હતા પણ એ પ્રાર્થનાથી વરસાદ થશે જ એવી શ્રદ્ધા એકમાત્ર નાનકડી બાળાને હતી. કુંવરબાઈનું મામેરું પૂરવા માટે મરવા પડેલા બળદને ગાડા સાથે જોડી તુલસીની માળા અને હાથમાં કરતાલ લઈને નરસિંહ મહેતા નીકળી પડે છે. ખાલી હાથે નરસિંહ જ્યારે નીકળે છે ત્યારે તેને વિશ્વાસ છે એ જગતના નાથ પર. આવી શ્રદ્ધા હોય તો આજે પણ મામેરાં પુરાય, આજે પણ હૂંડી ભરાય કે આજે પણ ચમત્કારો થાય, પણ અનિવાર્ય છે અતૂટ શ્રદ્ધા. કવિવર સુંદરમે બહુ માર્મિક પંક્તિમાં કહ્યું છે કે, 'નમું તને પથ્થરને ? નહીં, નહીં, શ્રદ્ધા તણાં આસનને નમું નમું .' એટલે નવકાર મંત્ર પરની અનન્ય શ્રદ્ધા જ ફળદાયી બની શકે.

એક પ્રશ્ન નવકારના સંદર્ભમાં કેટલાક ભાવકોને થાય તે એ કે અહીં અરિહંત પરમાત્માની વંદના પહેલા અને જે સિદ્ધ થઈ ગયા, સંપૂર્ણ મુક્ત થઈ ગયા એવા સિદ્ધ પરમાત્માની વંદના બીજા ક્રમે કેમ ? એનો સાદો-સીધો જવાબ એ છે કે સિદ્ધ પરમાત્માએ ખૂબ પરિશ્રમ કરી, ખૂબ સાધના કરી ને સ્વયં સિદ્ધ થયા. એમણે સ્વ કલ્યાણ કર્યું એ બહુ

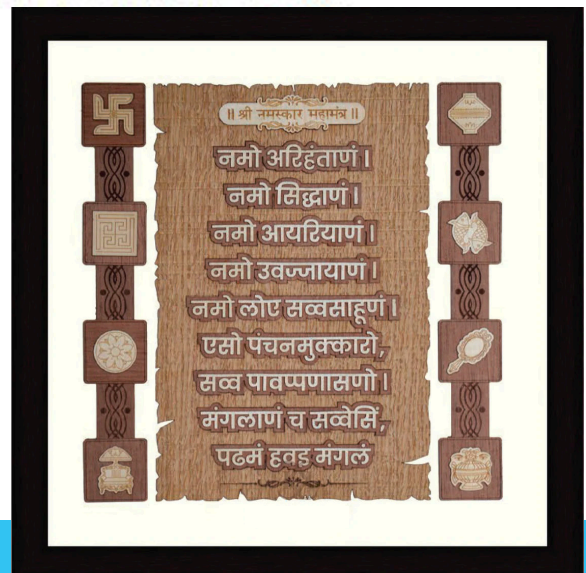
મોટી વાત છે, પણ અરિહંત પરમાત્મા કે જેમણે સ્વકલ્યાણ તો કર્યું જ પરંતુ એની સાથોસાથ તેમણે જગતનું કલ્યાણ પણ કર્યું. પોતે જ પોતાનું કાર્ય સિદ્ધ કરીને તેઓ મુક્ત ન થઈ ગયા પણ કેટલાંયને મુક્તિનો માર્ગ બતાવતા ગયા. અરિહંત પરમાત્માનો આ સૌથી મોટો ઉપકાર જગતના તમામ જીવો પર છે કે એમણે જગતને જેવું જોયું એવું મધાને દેખાડ્યું પણ ખરું. પરમ પ્રાપ્તિનો સંપૂર્ણ માર્ગ એ સૌ માટે ખુલ્લો મુક્તા ગયા. ભગવાનના આ અસીમ ઉપકાર માટે સૌથી પહેલા તીર્થંકર પરમાત્માને વંદન કરાય છે.

એક વાત એ પણ નોંધવી જોઈએ કે અરિહંત, સિદ્ધ આદિને વંદન કરીને આપણે અટકી ન જઈએ. અરિહંત કોણ? એ કેવા છે? તેમના ગુણ કયા કયા છે? વગેરેનું જ્ઞાન આપણે સ્વયં પણ મેળવી અને આપણા સંતાનોને પણ પ્રાપીએ. પાંચેય પરમેષ્ઠીના ગુણોને સમજીએ. એક વખત તેમને આ રીતે ઓળખીશું, તેમના ગુણોની પરખ કરીશું તો પ્રેમના પ્રત્યે અહોભાવ જાગશે. આ અહોભાવથી નમસ્કાર કહો કે વંદન આપોઆપ થઈ જશે. અને આમ પણ અહોભાવ વિનાના નમસ્કારનું કંઈ જ મૂલ્ય નથી. આ સંદર્ભમાં નવકાર એ આદર અને અહોભાવથી છલકાતો મંત્ર છે.

નવકારમાં જેમની વંદના કરાઈ છે એ પાંચે પરમેષ્ઠીનું એક સમાન ગુણ-લક્ષણ કે જેને અત્યારે આપણે સૌએ ઈળવવાની ખાસ જરૂર છે, તે છે ધૈર્ય-ધીરજ. સામાન્ય જીવન અને અધ્યાત્મની યાત્રા- આ બંને માટે અનિવાર્ય છે ધૈર્ય. કોઈ કાળમાં વિચલિત થયા વિના સ્થિર રહેવું તેવું સાધુથી માંડીને અરિહંત પરમાત્મા તમામ સૂચવે છે. એ બધાના જીવનમાં પણ જ્યારે જ્યારે પારાવાર મુશ્કેલીઓ ઊભી થઈ છે, કષ્ટો આવ્યા છે ત્યારે ત્યારે એમણે ધીરજ રાખી છે. નવકાર મંત્રનો જાપ પણ આપણને જીવનમાં આવતી નાની-મોટી સમસ્યાઓમાં ધૈર્ય ધારણ કરવાની પ્રેરણા આપે છે. જેમને આ મંત્ર દ્વારા આપણે વંદી રહ્યા છીએ તેમનો આ બહુ મોટો ગુણ આપણે સૌએ આત્મસાત કરવાનો છે એ માબત પણ પરોક્ષ રીતે નવકાર મંત્રની આરાધના સાથે વણાઈ જાય છે.

આ બધા સંદર્ભોને ધ્યાને લઈ ટૂંકમાં એટલું જ કહેવાનું થાય કે નવકાર એ પ્રેમ અને મૈત્રીના ગુણોને ઘુંટવાનો મંત્ર છે. પુરુષાર્થ કરવા પ્રેરતો મંત્ર છે. અધ્યાત્મમાર્ગની મહિમા કરતો મંત્ર છે. અધ્યાત્મના માર્ગ ઉપર ચાલવા માટે પ્રેરિત કરતો મંત્ર છે. આ એક એવો મંત્ર છે કે જે આપણને આપણી ભીતર શ્રદ્ધા જન્માવે છે. જે પાંચ પરમેષ્ઠીમાં સ્થાન પામ્યા એને વંદન કરતા કરતા એક દિવસ આપણને પણ એ પરમેષ્ઠીમાં સ્થાન અપાવે એવો મંત્ર છે. નવકારને માત્ર સાંપ્રદાયિક મંત્ર તરીકે ન જોતાં, એનાં વિશે આ રીતે થોડા બહોળા પરિપ્રેક્ષ્યમાં વિચારીશું તો નવકાર આપણા સૌ માટે જીવનમંત્ર બની રહેશે. પ્રેમ, મૈત્રી, વિનય, અહોભાવ આદિ ગુણોનું એક મધુર ઝરણું આપણી ભીતર ખળખળ વહેતું રહે ને એના જળ વહેતાં વહેતાં એક દિવસ જરૂરથી પરમ ચેતનારૂપ મહાઉદઘિમાં ભળશે. સિદ્ધ, સાધક અને પ્રાધનાનું મહિમાગાન કરતો આ નમસ્કાર મહામંત્ર આપણને પણ સિદ્ધત્વની સમીપ લઈ જશે.

(To read the English version of this article, go to:
<https://issuu.com/articles/42881767>)



APPLYING ANEKANTAVAD: USING MANIFOLDNESS TO FIND SOLUTIONS

By BHAVIN JHAVERI



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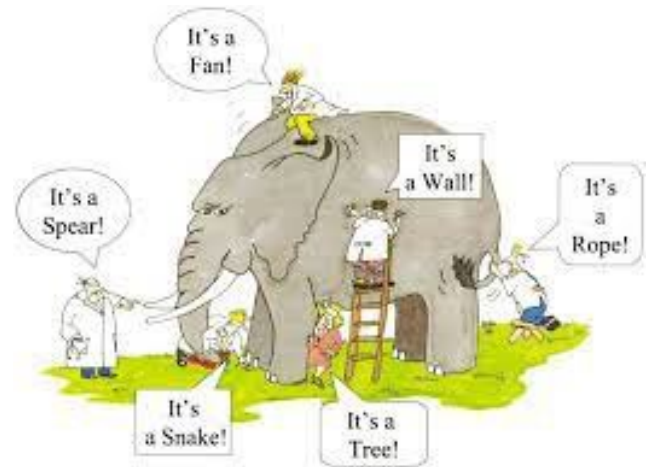
Anekantavad is Jainism's outstanding contribution to mankind. As per Lord Mahavir, we need to respect the perspectives of others while believing in our faith. He believed that by constructive dialogue based on mutual respect and a non-violent spirit, we can remove the disparities in our society. This timeless wisdom finds renewed relevance in our complex and divisive world.

Let's embark on a journey to explore the contemporary applications of Anekantavad and its significance.

Understanding Anekantvad

Anekantavad in simple terms means many-sidedness of a situation or in other words non-absolutism. Jainism states that any situation is seldom absolute or one-sided. Thus it encourages a discussion between the parties for integrating and reconciling their viewpoints. In order to resolve conflicts and disagreements, it is vital that we keep an open mind to other people's opinions and listen actively and empathetically. Essentially, this means that the people involved view the situation from someone else's perspective in addition to their own viewpoint. This is akin to embracing the diversity of thought that characterizes our world today.

We understand the significance of this principle through a story. A group of blind men who have never come across an elephant are touching and conceptualizing what it seems. Each man touched a different part of the elephant. The first man touched the elephant's body. It felt hard, big, and wide. He said: "It's like a wall". The second man touched one of the elephant's tusks. It felt smooth, hard, and sharp. He said: "It's like a spear". The third man touched the elephant's trunk. It felt long, thin, and wiggly. He said: "It's like a snake". The fourth man touched one of the legs. It felt thick, rough, hard, and round. He said: "It's like a tree". The fifth man touched one of the elephant's ears. It felt thin, and it moved. He said: "It's like a fan". The sixth man touched the elephant's tail. It felt long, thin, and strong. He said: "It's like a rope".



The moral of the story is that truth is relative to one's own experience, and because the truth is relative, we all should respect the perspective of others. This is due to the rationale that their views of reality are based on a different belief than our own. Thus, they view the situation through their own filter of deep-seated thinking and are conditioned through their own belief system.

The Need for Anekantavad

When we are thrown into complex problems we try hard to figure out various options and find a solution. In case all of our attempts to find a viable solution fail, we could explore the spirit of Anekantavad to come to our rescue. Instead of focusing on finding the solution, we could probe and examine the problem itself. We could analyze its traits, its multiple facets, and the different angles or viewpoints. If we were just to open up and consider different viewpoints, our probability of finding a creative solution would be far greater. By describing the problem using multiple points of view we may evolve to figure out the solution. Essentially, a lateral view of the problem and framing it through several different points of view could lead us to discover an innovative solution! Let us understand how this perspective could be applied to similar situations in our lives.

1) For inter-personal relationships

Inter-personal relationships can be developed using this relative perspective of Anekantavad. When someone faces arguments and disputes within a group of people or in a family, we intuitively know that no one is completely right. Thinking with an open mind enables us to acknowledge and consider the other person's views too. This develops relativity in us and reduces the sole persistence of our own feelings and opinions. Thus a sense of humbleness and willingness to adjust grows within us. This leads us to build happy and synergistic relationships with others. As a result, your lifestyle improves and your external appearance becomes more charming and graceful.

2) For organizations

For leaders seeking to effect change, applying Anekantavad helps them consider various aspects of change and engage in open, two-way conversations. This approach fosters mutual respect, facilitates integrative bargaining, and increases the likelihood of finding mutually beneficial solutions.

Let's take the example of workers in an organization who plan to go on strike to get their demands approved. By applying the principles of Anekantavad we could evaluate the various angles and viewpoints of all parties that would be impacted by the outcome. An open mind and a genuine attempt to give consideration to other's pain points and their perspective increases mutual respect. This makes it conducive to integrative bargaining. As a result, a spirit of give and take and an attempt to reach a mutually beneficial agreement will develop in us. This increases the odds of finding a resolution and averting the strike or the destructive course of action.

3) For personal growth

In a world where loneliness and feelings of unfulfillment are prevalent, Anekantvad can serve as a guide. It encourages self-reflection and reframing, enabling individuals to find inner peace and compassion, even when feeling unloved.

For instance, consider someone who believes, "Others don't love me." Applying Anekantvad, we gently encourage this individual to delve deeper into their feelings by posing essential questions: Does expressing love for others inherently mean that they do not love you? Has anyone explicitly conveyed a lack of love towards you? What actions can you take to nurture your own happiness and lovable qualities? Through this process of self-introspection, a transformation unfolds,

allowing forgiveness toward others and a readiness to seek forgiveness for one's missteps. This simple act of reframing opens doors to countless possibilities, reshaping our inner world and nurturing boundless compassion, not only for ourselves but for others as well.

4) For changing our outlook towards the world and reducing triggers

Thus, Anekantvad is a method of analysis and thinking that is very liberal and can be applicable in our current world and going forward. It is a way of thinking that enables us to be open to different approaches and directions. You may agree that today's world feels like a VUCA: volatile, uncertain, complex, & ambiguous. By applying Anekantvad we can be open-minded and flexible to change based on the emerging reality. This trait develops our cognitive agility to think and adapt. Additionally, we could use it to not get agitated in volatile situations that trigger our minds to a fight or flight response. By viewing the external trigger in a non-judgmental manner and introspecting it from multiple points of view you loosen the tight and restrictive grip of your own feelings on that topic. This allows you to regulate your emotions in alignment with the outcomes that you intend to achieve.

In conclusion, the essence of Anekantavad lies in acknowledging the multifaceted nature of existence. By giving due consideration to different facets of a situation, we not only expand our understanding but also cultivate compassion for others through open-mindedness. This approach empowers us to engage in lateral thinking, fostering greater agility and creativity. As we apply Anekantvad in our lives, it enriches our outlook towards others, making us more empathetic and compassionate. Humbleness and unselfishness naturally grow within us, paving the way for a world where understanding and unity flourish. Through Anekantavad, we embark on a journey toward a harmonious and interconnected existence, where diversity is celebrated, and empathy reigns supreme. It is a way to realize that "We're all in this together!"

In the words of Tirthankar Mahavir, "Whatever I say, you must test this with your own reasoning and verify it through your own experience. Do not accept what I say blindly by faith alone until it passes the litmus test of intellection. Otherwise, it will never be yours. If you accept what I teach on the basis of the sacred texts, or from my convincing reasoning, or even because of my radiant personality, but not by testing with your own reasoning, then, in the end, this will create only darkness (ignorance) in you and not light."

JAIN YOGA: A FASCINATING AND UNDER-RESEARCHED TRADITION

BY CHRISTOPHER JAIN MILLER, PHD



Christopher Jain Miller is co-founder, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Professor of Jain and Yoga Studies at Arihanta Institute. He is a Visiting Researcher at the University of Zürich's Asien-Orient-Institut and Visiting Professor at Claremont School of Theology. Christopher is the author of *Embodying Transnational Yoga: Eating, Singing, and Breathing in Transformation* (Routledge 2023) and co-editor of the volume *Engaged Jainism: Critical and Constructive Approaches to the Study of Jain Social Engagement* (SUNY Forthcoming).

As the well-known scholar of yoga traditions David Gordon White noted long ago, the word “yoga” and its corresponding verbal root “yuj” have more definitions in the Sanskrit dictionary than most any other word. “Yoga” is often popularly understood to imply that something has been “united,” which is certainly one of the many meanings of the term, though every time it is used in South Asian texts, we must carefully consider the term’s precise meaning. This is particularly important when we are studying the term “yoga” in Jain scriptures, where the definition of the term changes to imply a variety of meanings as it moves through new historical contexts.



Acharya Sushil Kumar in Shoulderstand Posture (Śīrṣāsana),
Siddhachalam, New Jersey (Photo by Parveen Jain)

Yoga continues to increase in popularity, particularly with regard to the mental and physical relief it can bring in our shared times of global uncertainty. I have practiced yoga for 15 years, worked in the yoga industry, taught yoga at the popular and university levels, and have even finished a PhD and published a new book on the subject of yoga. Throughout all of these years and activities, my own appreciation for

yoga has only increased, and particularly for the Jain yoga tradition, due to its recommendation for living morally amidst all of life’s ethical challenges.

Jain Yoga has a long and complicated history that is under-researched, though it continues to receive renewed attention. The tradition has some origins in the *Ācārāṅga-Sūtra*, the earliest surviving Jain scripture (ca. 4th c. BCE), where we find Mahāvīra meditating in various situations and postures. Meditation, or “dhyāna” (Prakrit: “jhāṇa”), becomes a key purifying spiritual practice during Mahāvīra’s years of ascetic wandering before he attained omniscience. Arising from Mahāvīra’s meditation is, of course, his commitment to the vows of non-harming, truth, not stealing, celibacy, and non-possession. Indeed, when Mahāvīra realizes through his wanderings and meditations that life is everywhere and that nothing wants to experience pain, he does everything he can to avoid causing harm to other living beings.

In some of the other earliest references to yoga in other Jain texts such as the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga-Sūtra* (ca. 2nd c. BCE), for example, we find that the term yogavān (Prakrit: “jogvaṃ”) is used to refer to “one who applies himself to contemplation or yoga” (*Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary*). What this means, according to Jinadāsa’s later commentary on the text, is that one who practices yoga exercises samyama by continually exercising carefulness (samiti) and restraint (guṇṭi) (Samani Pratibha Pragyā 2020).¹ This is a clear continuation of the teaching of Mahāvīra, which prizes the protection of life in pursuit of the spiritual path. Yoga is in these ancient sources, in other words, constituted by restraint (samyama) in all that one does in pursuit of liberation.

Interestingly, as the Jain tradition further develops into the classical period, the word “yoga” seems to have expanded to take on new meanings. For example, in Umāsvāti’s *Tattvārtha-Sūtra* (ca. 5th c. CE), we find in verse 6.1 that “Yoga is the action of the body, speech,

and mind” (kāya-vān-manah karma yogaḥ) and that “it [yoga] is inflow” (sa āsravaḥ). Yoga, which is action (karman), is therefore understood to *cause* the inflow (āsrava) of karma, a process which the text tells us we must understand and eliminate. In this context, the word “yoga” refers to action that attracts karma and not a practice or methodology as we commonly encounter in other traditions. Yoga is instead merely “action” that occurs on account of the soul’s association with mind, body, and speech.

Indeed, later in verse 9.1, we are told, “Saṃvara is the stopping of the inflow (of karma)” (āsrava-nirodhaḥ saṃvaraḥ). Umāsvāti’s choice of the word “nirodha” (stopping, restraining) here is particularly striking, since Patañjali, the author of the well-known *Yoga-Sūtra* (ca. 5th c. CE), uses the same exact word to define his own yoga, which beneficially leads to samādhi (meditative absorption). According to Patañjali in sūtra 1.2, “Yoga is the restraint (nirodha) of the fluctuations of the mind” (yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ). Since yoga was defined as karma-attracting action, for Umāsvāti, pure meditation (śukla-dhyāna) was instead the paramount liberating practice because it terminated in absolute stillness and liberation from karma.

With this in mind, the Jain Yoga tradition was clearly influencing, but also influenced by, other yoga traditions. Patañjali’s *Yoga-Sūtra* inherits, for example, its fundamental ethical framework, the yamas, from the Jain tradition. Paramount among these ethical practices is of course ahiṃsā, or non-harming, followed by satya (truth), asteya (not stealing), brahmacharya (celibacy), and aparigraha (non-possession).

However, several Jain Yoga authors following Umāsvāti also placed their yoga systems *within the context* of Patañjali’s popular eight-limbed framework. Haribhadra’s *Yoga-Dṛṣṭi-Samuccaya* (ca. 8th c. CE), for example, presents several eight-fold yogas including one modeled after Patañjali’s. Similarly, following his presentation of the three jewels (ratna-traya) Hemacandra’s famous *Yoga-Śāstra* (12th c. CE) incorporates Patañjali’s eight-limbed framework, as well as other elements from Śaiva and tantric influence. Nevertheless, both Haribhadra and Hemacandra creatively retained a commitment to the

Jain path of purifying and eliminating one’s karma as the ultimate aim of spiritual life.

Conclusion

In summary, the Jain Yoga tradition, a fraction of which I have mentioned in this article, has evolved over time. So too, as we can see, has the definition of the word “yoga” itself. However, the brilliant and creative Jain authors I have mentioned here maintained a commitment to the Jain tradition’s paramount virtue of non-harming, or ahiṃsā, as well as to the need to eliminate one’s karma through the perfection of this virtue.

Though we as householders in this life may not be headed to liberation any time soon, we do have the opportunity in every moment of our life to practice Jain Yoga, which, if we want to simplify it down to a single thing, might constitute our continuous restraint from causing harm to humans, animals, and environment. We can for example vote humanely for non-violence, eat humanely by avoiding all products made from animals, and travel humanely by avoiding flights, driving less, and using public transportation or walking more. Our future, and your yoga, depends on it.

Are you interested in learning more? Be sure to attend Arihanta Institute’s online conference, “Yoga in Jainism,” on Earth Day Weekend in April 2024. (for more information, go to: <https://bit.ly/47eMmil>)

You can also learn more about the Jain Yoga tradition in several of our online self-study courses, or even enroll in our Master’s Degree Program track in Engaged Jain Studies and join us in researching and practicing this incredible Jain Yoga tradition! Learn more at arihantainstitute.org



ⁱ For more information on the early Jain Yoga tradition, please read Samani Pratibha Pragma’s article “Yoga and Meditation in the Jain Tradition” in the *Routledge*

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CULTIVATING INNER PEACE IN A TURBULENT WORLD THROUGH BHAVANAS - BY PAYAL SETH



Payal Seth is an economics researcher at the Tata-Cornell Institute, Cornell University. She is also a passionate author who crafts illuminating articles, dedicated to exploring and celebrating the profound significance of spiritual values in our modern lives. Her articles have been published on several national and international platforms.

In a world marked by political unrest, conflict, and division, the pursuit of peace has never been more critical. Peace, however, is not a mere absence of external conflict but a profound state of equilibrium that must first be nurtured within ourselves. All ancient philosophies promote inner peace to be the cornerstone of fostering peace in the external world. In Jain philosophy the practice of Bhavanas or Reflections is an invaluable tool that guides us on this transformative journey. In this article, we will explore the concept of inner peace, the significance of cultivating it, and how Bhavanas, and other contemplative practices, can aid in achieving this elusive tranquility.

The Vitality of Inner Peace

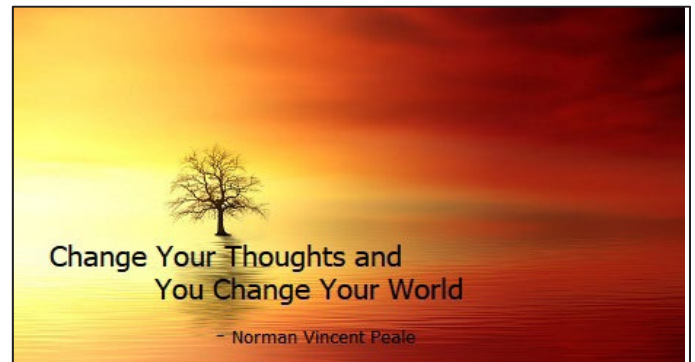
Amidst the cacophony of divisive politics and social discord, the concept of inner peace may appear distant and unattainable. However, it is essential to understand that genuine peace originates from within. Inner peace is a state of mental and emotional harmony that empowers us to confront life's challenges with grace and resilience. It equips us to address conflicts and differences with compassion and understanding rather than hostility and aggression. By cultivating inner peace, we are better prepared to be the positive contributors to the world, engage in constructive dialogues, and work towards equitable solutions.

Importance of Thought Process

There are many situations in the external world that make us anxious, angry, and frustrated. We tend to blame others and circumstances for our state of mind; however, we have to realize that the main reason that happens to us is our thought process. When faced with similar challenges one person manages to stay calm vs. another person is stressed out. Although there are many reasons for this difference, such as cultural background, upbringing, belief system, etc; one of the reasons is the ability to accept the situation. And to develop such ability of acceptance we need to understand the true nature of the world, everyday realities of life.

Jainism recommends contemplating on the 12 Bhavanas, which can help us in understanding the way things are so that we can learn to accept any situation in a calm manner. An important aspect of these Bhavanas is that while explaining the realities of life or the external world, they promote a shift in our focus from what is temporary and destructible to what is eternal – the soul. This creates a keen desire in us to explore our true nature. We put our efforts towards seeking peace and happiness that is

within us which can ultimately lead us to inner serenity. In addition, there are 4 action-oriented bhavanas which focus more on our behavior and relationship with others. Let's explore some essential bhavanas that can guide us toward cultivating inner peace.



1) Contemplative Bhavanas

Anitya (Impermanence)

Anitya encourages us to recognize the impermanence of all things in life. It makes us realize that our physical body, youth, beauty, health, wealth, sensual pleasures, power, fame, everything is temporary. It reminds us that change is the only constant. When we embrace impermanence, we release attachments to material possessions, relationships, and ideologies that may trigger inner turmoil.

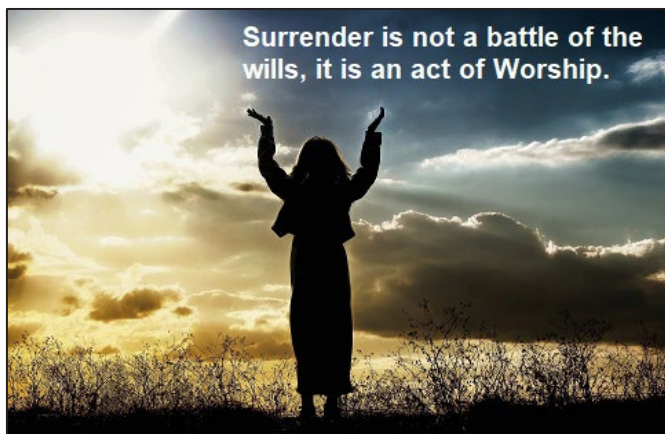


We learn to treasure the fleeting beauty of the present moment and relinquish the anxiety caused by a preoccupation with the past or future. This bhavana is

meant to lift us up when things are not happening according to our expectations. The purpose of such contemplation is for us to get a better understanding of reality and create a keen desire in us to know who we really are.

Asharan (Helplessness)

This contemplation encourages us to reflect on the inherent vulnerability and helplessness in the face of life's uncertainties as, despite our best efforts, we cannot control all aspects of our lives. For instance, no object in the world, be it incantations, medicines, protective gears, any type of learning or even the lords can protect us from death. In our lives, we can contemplate how helplessness is evident in our response to natural disasters. When a powerful hurricane strikes, we witness the force of nature overpowering human efforts. Despite our technological advancements, we cannot control or prevent such occurrences. By contemplating helplessness, we begin to cultivate humility and surrender to the greater forces of the universe.



The purpose of this Bhavana is not to be afraid of death; but to be ready for it. By changing our focus from the body to the soul we develop the faith and realize that we are indestructible! Such realization requires complete surrender to Bhagwan's teachings in order to experience real peace and bliss. This Bhavana promotes such surrendership.

Ekatva Bhavana (Solitariness)

Contemplation that we, as a soul, are alone in this world is Ekatva Bhavana. This bhavana teaches us that due to ignorance, we depend on other people, material things, money, etc for our happiness and that the real happiness is in solitude which brings us peace and bliss.

Anyatva Bhavana (Separateness)

Contemplation on the fact that everything other than the soul is not ours. This helps us in reducing our attachment to all things that are external which in turn reduces our expectations and thus helps us in being more peaceful.

This bhavana also encourages us to find out what really belongs to us and helps us progress on the spiritual path.

Other Contemplative Bhavanas

In addition to the above there are other bhavanas that focus on the nature of Karma, Nature of Universe, Dharma, and Rarity of True Knowledge. Contemplation on these gives us better understanding of these concepts and increases our faith in the teachings of Bhagwan. Our devotion becomes deeper and our desire for Samyak Darshan and liberation gets stronger. We learn to look past the problems of daily life and focus on our higher goal resulting in greater acceptance and peace.

2) Action-Oriented Bhavanas

The contemplative bhavanas discussed above focus more on our own thought process, whereas the focus of action-oriented bhavanas is on improving our relationship with others. These are also important because they help us in developing virtues such as compassion, tolerance, acceptance, equanimity, etc. which also are instrumental in making us more peaceful in our daily life. Here is brief description of these bhavanas:

Maitri (Friendship)

Maitri encourages us to extend love and goodwill towards ourselves and others, fostering a sense of interconnectedness, friendship, and compassion.

Karuna (Compassion)

Karuna guides us to develop empathy and understanding towards those who are suffering, promoting a more compassionate outlook.

Pramod (Appreciation)

Pramod teaches us to appreciate virtues of others and experience joy in the happiness and success of others, eliminating jealousy and negative emotions.

Madhyasthya (Equanimity)

Madhyasthya deals with remaining centered in all situations and do our duties while being detached from the result of our efforts. This helps us in not creating turmoil in our mind when things do not happen as per our expectations.

Techniques to attain Inner Peace

As these bhavanas become integrated into our lives, we will experience less volatility in our emotions, and a sense of calmness. Once the intent of our lives becomes to find the eternal inner peace, undisturbed by the external, worldly events, the question becomes what can we do to sustain in this path. Traditionally, there are some powerful techniques that can help us. We will discuss the three of these in broad terms.

Positive Attitude

Developing a positive attitude is crucial for bringing about a lasting change. Whenever a negative thought arises, try

purposely creating a positive thought. If our car is stuck at the red traffic light for too long, then, instead of listening to the usual complaining voice inside our head, we can try saying this in your mind, "Wow. What an opportunity to relax. I cannot be in a rush because the red signal won't let me. I guess it's time to watch my breath, calm down, and enjoy the experience of just being". Taking this positive attitude a notch above could transform our minds to be grateful. Now you can look around and think about the laborers who built the roads, the workers who built the car we are driving, and the fact that we are able to drive! Developing this sense of positive attitude and gratitude helps us affirm all the goodness in the world. This way, we are neither fighting our mind nor pushing away the negative thoughts. We are just replacing the negative with the positive. Over time, positive thinking will become an automatic part of the mind, instead of willful efforts. A positive mind is a much more nicer environment to live in.

Mantra or Affirmations

Mantra refers to training our minds to repeat a single word or phrase over and over until it gets stuck in the mind. Our minds work in different layers. Even though we might be speaking to someone, there can be thoughts going on in the "back of the mind". Mantra offers a layer to the mind that is always there. It is a balanced, pleasant, and safe place to rest. As the mantra effortlessly goes on in the background, it gives us a choice of which layer of the mind to focus on. With positive thinking, we neutralize the negative thoughts with the positive ones. With mantra chanting, we shift the focus of our consciousness from background thoughts to the mantra. The mantra doesn't have to be traditional like the Namokar Mantra or Om Namah Shivay. It could be the name of your Guru or a deity that you worship. Or affirmations as simple as "I am always fine" to as beautiful as "Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better" would also work. Instilling it in our daily lives can be easily done by putting aside time for its repetition each morning and evening for 15 minutes. Tying it to our breaths would also be very effective. We can use our smartphones to remind us to repeat mantra during the day. Over time, it will become a habit and the mantra will go on in the background of our mind in daily life.

Understanding who we are

This is the most imperative technique. We are the soul, and its innate nature is that of an observer or the witness consciousness. This is deeper than all the techniques because it doesn't involve the mind. We don't need to do anything with this technique, but just be the one who notices that the mind is creating thoughts and we are aware of them. To do this, we won't be disturbed by the thoughts that are being created. We are just the observer. This creates a distinction between us (soul, whose nature is *consciousness*) and thoughts and emotions (*objects of consciousness*).

For instance, we can look at what is in front of us. Just look, don't think about it. Now look at the back. Practice the simple task of just seeing. We will notice that the

thoughts have something to say about what we are seeing. Eventually, we will reach a state where we can observe what is going on in the mind, and we might not be comfortable about it. Then there will be a tendency to do something about it. At that point, we can just relax. This is not intuitive. But it is indeed this resistance and the urge to do something that makes the situation worse. Instead, we can notice that we are *noticing* the disturbance, but we are not the disturbance itself. This is realizing who we truly are. Spiritual practices like this are not about changing the objects that we are looking at, but it is about accepting these but not getting sucked into them. It's about being detached and feeling at peace with whatever the heart and mind are doing. When we become totally comfortable with every thought and emotion, those will stop creating any inner disturbance. Hence any step towards the realization of who we truly are makes us surrender to the reality of what is happening. This is the final and the most important pillar of discovering the eternal inner peace which is already our true nature.



In conclusion, by cultivating inner peace, we equip ourselves to navigate external challenges with poise and compassion, ultimately contributing to a more peaceful world. The transformation of the external world begins with the transformation of our own hearts and minds.

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JAIN SOCIETY OF GREATER DETROIT HONORS TWO YOUNG DIKSHARTHIS By SANJAY BHANDARI



Sanjay Bhandari is a section editor of the Young Generation section of Jain Digest. He is a co-chairman of JAINA;s Jains Got Talent (JGTP) committee and has served as a judge of JGT competitions during the 2023 JAINA Convention. He has also held various positions at Jain Society of Greater Detroit. He has two master's degrees MBA and MCA. He works as an Integration Manager at Marathon Petroleum. Sanjay enjoys traveling, music, movies, cricket, singing, socializing, and writing movie reviews on social platforms.

Jain Society of Greater Detroit (JSGD) Sangh had the honor to witness a once-in-a-lifetime historical event in their own temple. USA born Diksharthis Tanya (20 years) and Karan (17 years), and their father Vinitbhai graced the society with his presence (their mother Leenaben couldn't visit USA) during the Diksharthi Bahumaan Ceremony held on Sunday, October 29th.

This was a very special occasion for the Detroit Sangh because both Tanya and Karan got their early Jain education at JSGD. Members of JSGD and various Sanghs around the country came to do Darshan of the Diksharthis.

Scholar Shrenikbhai Gala led the program with his motivating speech and hosting the event. He commended the Diksharthis for embarking on a journey no other young Jains raised in America have taken before. Shrenikbhai profoundly pointed out that if we all so routinely upgrade our *bhog* items, like cell phones, then we should also place importance on upgrading our *yog*, just as the Mumukshus have set out to do. He mentioned that seven significant changes in a person's life for taking Diksha are Vichaar, Aachar, Clothes, Kesh, Name, Place, and Bhav. He said, "Remove I (ego), want (desire) from the sentence *I want happiness* and you will get happiness within you only." He revealed very good secrets of a Happy life => No comparison, no competition, and no conflict.

JSGD Chairperson Pritishbhai Shah, President Jayaben Shah, Sharadbhai, Chiragbhai Zaveri, Rishi Zaveri, and many others conveyed their anumodana to both the Diksharthis.

Tanya and Karan both excelled in school and even managed to fast-track their education to complete early so that they could take Diksha. Tanya and Karan's childhood friends from JSGD also shared great memories with them mentioning how self-controlled and religious both kids were from an early age. The family returned to India in 2015 and settled in Vadodara, Gujarat. In 2017, in the auspicious presence of Acharya RatnasunderSuriji M.S, Tanya and Karan enrolled in Upadhaan tap aradhana. In 2020, they decided to take Diksha under Acharyashriji's guidance.



The grand Bahumaan ceremony began with the Diksharthis entering in a palki on the red carpet accompanied by the youth dancing to welcome them. This was followed by speeches, bhavana, bhakti geet, and swamivatsalya.





Message from Tanya and Karan

Both Tanya and Karan were excited to revisit JSGD after 8 years, having been associated with the society for 10 years, and they shared their experiences and inspirations to take Diksha.

Tanya talked about her intriguing inspiration to take Diksha stemming from the movie Kung Fu Panda, as she drew a lot of meaning from the movie about the value and guidance of a Guru as well as her own Guru being a guiding light in taking the path of Diksha. She shared that a Guru's heart is full of compassion and under the right guidance, you can achieve anything you set your heart to, just as she has. The Jain Study class at JSGD pathshala also played a key role in her connection to Jainism and the path of pursuing higher spiritual knowledge.

Karan mentioned how grateful he is to all the founders, seniors, and gurus from JSGD for giving a good foundation to both, which enabled them to make this crucial decision in life. He mentioned that he met Acharya Vijay Ratnasundar Surishvar ji Maharaj on the very first day when they moved to India which had helped him take this magical turn to this noble path and his entire life brightened up. Within 2 years, Guru Ji saw the potential in him to take Diksha.

Thanks to Executive team (EC) and Vinitbhai's JSGD friends for leading, volunteering and organising this mega event.

Both Diksharthis are very thankful to their parents for being so supportive of their decision. **Tanya and Karan will take Diksha on January 24, 2024, in Dhulia, Maharashtra**, and have cordially invited everyone to come and bless them.

Message from Diksharthis' Family

Tanya and Karan's father, Vinitbhai, mentioned very humbly that how as a father he considered all aspects before making such a noble decision and said that he and his family were privileged and honored to be part of this society and this occasion. He invited everyone to attend the Diksha ceremony of his children along with 4 others. It's great to hear that 40 members of the society have already accepted his invitation. Vinitbhai mentioned the importance of considering all implications before making such a noble but tough decision. He also demonstrated the importance of showing unwavering support if someone wants to take this *Sanyam Jeevan* (controlled life), as it is a major life decision.



Vinitbhai provided insight into the path that led the Diksharthis to their decision. Attending Jain Pathshala, frequently visiting Upashrayas and gaining direct insight into the Sadhu and Saadhavis' daily lives and listening to Pravachans with intentionality were all instrumental in their to decision to take Diksha.

The Diksharthis' family was incredibly grateful for all the love, support, and hospitality the JSGD society showed them during their stay, visiting after 8 years since their move to India, and graciously donated \$501 and sacred items as a token of appreciation from their family to JSGD. We are incredibly proud of our young Diksharthis for embarking upon this spiritual journey and all JSGD society members wish them all the best in their endeavors.

The livestream recording of the event can be viewed at: <https://bit.ly/JSGD-Diksharthis>

JAINA'S LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE

CRAFTING THE FUTURE OF JAINS IN NORTH AMERICA - BY DR. MANOJ JAIN



Manoj Jain, MD MPH is an infectious disease physician, a writer, an international leader in healthcare quality improvement and a promoter of Jain spiritual causes. Dr. Jain received his engineering, doctorate, and public health degree from Boston University. He did his residency, fellow and executive public health training at Boston City Hospital, New England Medical Center, Tufts University and Harvard School of Public Health, respectively. He has served as a consultant to the World Bank, World Health Organization and has been interviewed by CNN and National Public Radio. Dr. Jain is an adjunct assistant professor at Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University in Atlanta. During the pandemic, Dr. Jain was dubbed as "Dr. Fauci of Memphis" by the city. He is the author of book Mahavira, the Hero of Nonviolence and Jain Path, www.jainpath.org, and a member of JAINA's Long Range Planning Committee.

Have you ever wondered about the future of Jains in North America? Will our community thrive and be influential, like certain groups such as the Jewish communities? Or will we be on the verge of extinction, like some Native American-Indian communities? These are some of the questions that the JAINA's Long Range Planning (LRP) Committee is addressing.



The LRP Committee, with the leadership of Dr. Dipak Jain, the former Dean of Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, has been convening Jain Leadership meetings for the past 20 years. This Forum has been one of the most impactful projects of the LRP Committee.

Our Vision

The vision we share as part of JAINA has four objectives, and we would like to ask you to join our mission.

1) We **EVOLVE** and promote Jain practices by adapting the Jain Way of Life in North America, and specifically for those making the transition to the US and for the youth in the 21st century.

2) We **EDUCATE** Jains and non-Jains to create a strong, united, and vibrant Jain community by promoting the study and understanding of the principles and values of Jainism on a non-sectarian basis.

3) We **EXPAND** awareness of Jainism and strive to make global impact through strategic partnerships for academic and cultural exchanges nationally and in the global world with focused efforts across North America and in India.

4) We work to **ENERGIZE** our organization by mobilizing our community to evoke social change through the consistent creation of new tools and resources.

2005 Jain Leadership Forum

Looking back at the past Forums as early as 2005, there were crucial takeaways that continue to inform our efforts today. Various groups identified areas of need to brand Jainism from a corporate world perspective. These groups addressed market segmentation, provided ideas for products and services, discussed branding and packaging, and proposed restructuring for Jain organizations and JAINA.

One group focused on defining the customer and presented the importance of multi-channel communication to reach a broader audience. Another group explored the products and services that can be provided to Jain centers and individual members, emphasizing the creation of functional and psychological value.

Yet, another group discussed the branding and packaging of Jainism, highlighting the need to associate concepts such as non-violence, non-absolutism, and

non-possessiveness with Jainism. They also emphasized the role of Jain centers as living and learning centers of the Jain Way of Life.

The last group addressed the restructuring of Jain organizations and JAINA for the next century, emphasizing the importance of teaching and communication. They recommended having professional preachers, Sadhus/Sadhvis, and Panditjis, at the forefront of the hierarchy and discussed the idea of a unified leadership role. The goal was to create a vibrant, self-sufficient, and professionally run central umbrella Jain organization that meets the needs of the Jain community for the next 25 years.

2024 Jain Leadership Forum

We are excited to share with you that the LRP Committee is reinitiating the Jain Leadership Forum this spring, once again, under the leadership of Dipak Jain. We invite you to take an interest in the 2024 Forum, scheduled for April 5-7, 2024, in Chicago. www.jainleadership.org The Forum is organized by JAINA's Long Range Planning (LRP) Committee, JAINA EC, YJA, YJP, and JITO. It aims to elevate the Jain community in North America beyond success toward enduring significance. Together, we can ensure our



religion and values are upheld and they positively impact society at large.

The Jain Leadership Forum-2024 will be a dynamic hub fostering discussions on the future of Jains in North America. It aims to develop a vision of Jainism, outlining its evolving role in this region. The forum also intends to provide actionable guidance for individuals, Jain Centers, JAINA, and academic institutions to promote and preserve Jainism effectively. Additionally, it aims to kickstart impactful projects, such as mentoring programs for young leaders.

Now, it is time to take our organization to the next level, building upon the successes of the past. We are calling upon future Jain leaders and those passionate about Jainism's future to join us in shaping this transformative journey. Join us at the Jain Leadership Forum-2024 to contribute to shaping the future of Jains in North America. Together, we can ensure our community's enduring significance.

For more information please contact Manoj Jain at 901-240-2602 or mjainmd1@gmail.com or see website Jainleadership.org

Outcome

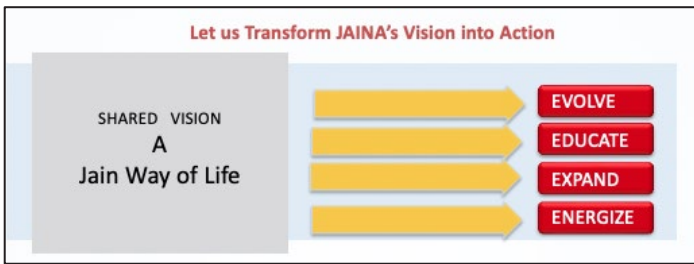
EVOLVE (our JWOL practices)	EXPAND (awareness in Jains and Non-Jains)
EDUCATE (and impact trends)	ENERGIZE (our organization)

Evolve - our JWOL Practices
by adopting the Jain Way of Life to the modern N.A. lifestyle.

Educate - Jains/Non-Jains in JWOL
to create a strong and united Jain community.

Expand – Awareness
through strategic partnerships with media, institutions, and non-Jain organizations.

Energize – Jains in N.A.
through volunteers and donations to create a vibrant professionally run JAINA.



Leadership Conferences

JAINA LRP Committee



SAVE THE DATE
Fri Jan 23 - Sun Jan 25, 2015

JAINA Long Range Planning Committee presents

'EMPOWERING NEXTGEN LEADERS OF THE JAIN COMMUNITY'

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- Empowering NextGen Leaders of the Jain Community
- Empowering NextGen Leaders of the Jain Community
- Networking opportunities with industry leaders
- Sharing the vision for Jain Digest, JAINA, & J.
- Leading with Jain values and principles

CONFERENCE DETAILS

EMPOWERING NEXTGEN LEADERS OF THE JAIN COMMUNITY

REGISTRATION LOCATION: PROGRAM OUTLINE

HOSTED BY: Jain Community

JAIN SCULPTURES AND ART COLLECTIONS IN MUSEUMS

CHARIOT COMPOSED OF CALCULATIONS AT THE ASIAN ART MUSEUM, SAN FRANCISCO

By DHRUTI GHIYA RATHI



Dhruiti is a New Jersey-based MBA, SAP and FJAS professional. A Pathshala and guest lecturer for Jainism at VCU University and High schools, she has spoken at Comparative Religion Conference, Religious Baccalaureates and Rotary Club in Richmond, VA. Involved with Jainism-Says-Blogspot, she researches Jain Iconography, Epigraphy, Historical and Numismatic references in Jain literature overlooked by historians, and on the applications of Jain principles. Dhruiti's research was presented at the Dating of Mahavir Nirvana Symposium by ISJS. dhruতিরathi@gmail.com

As a part of our series on Jain Art and Sculpture, we bring to you exciting information about a painting from the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco that has puzzled the visitors as well as the curators of the museum. The content and the details of the painting have been a mystery so far. The museum identifies the painting as:



Chariot composed of calculations, from an unidentified Jain manuscript:

Fig 1 DATE: Approx.1400-1450, PLACE OF ORIGIN: India; Gujarat state MEDIUM: Ink and colors on paper DIMENSIONS H: 4 1/2 in x W. 10 in. CLASSIFICATIONS: Painting CREDIT LINE: Gift of Betty and Bruce Alberts DEPARTMENT: South Asian Art NUMBER: 2021.111 ON VIEW: GALLERY LOCATION 3

The Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, has a painting depicting a chariot with numbers that are presently presumed to be indicating some horoscope calculations. Per the Museum: "Some followers of the Jain religion were, and sometimes still are, interested in horoscopes, the calculation of auspicious dates, and the deriving of mathematical formulas thought to underlie the structures of the world. This more than five-hundred-year-old painting shows characteristics of early western Indian manuscript art. The artist gives the horse and charioteer bold, easily readable silhouettes. Typical of the period are the pointy facial features of the charioteer and his "protruding eye," the eye on the farther side of the face sticks out beyond the profile. We don't know what the numbers and calculations shown here within the outline of a chariot signify. The museum requests any further information on the calculation numbers in the painting."

An Illustrated Ardhamagadhi Dictionary by A C Woolner and Ratnachandrajī¹ identifies the above painting as **18000 Shilang Rath (Chariot with 18000 Jewels of Right Conduct (Charitra) for a Jain Monk)**, based on the *Panchashak* written by Haribhadra Suri. Haribhadra's timeline as concurred by Jacobi, A. N Upadhye, Hiralal Jain relates to 750 CE. A. Barth suggests

¹ An Illustrated Ardhamagadhi Dictionary, Ratnachandrajī, 2nd edition, Motilal Banrasidass 2016, Vol 1 Pg.131

his period as the 9th century CE. Haribhadra Suri was a Brahmin scholar highly well versed in many languages with knowledge of Vedas and other scriptures. He was a great debater and had a lot of pride in his debating skills. He vowed that if he came across a *shloka* that he could not understand, he would become that person's disciple. He came across a *Sadhavi* reciting a sutra from Acharya Jinbhadra's (6th -7th century CE) *Sanghrani* that he could not understand, and hence he became a disciple of Acharya Jindatt (or Jinbhadra or Jinbhatt). Prabhavak Charitra and Prabhandh Kosh indicate Jinbhadra as the Guru of Haribhadra.² He is known to compile about 1400-1440 *granths*, of which presently only 100 of them have been discovered. The **18000 Shilang Rath** caters to the Right Conduct (*Samyak Charitra*), an essential requirement for the monks on the path towards *Moksha* or Salvation. Haribhadra gained this knowledge on the *Samyak Charitra* from Acharya Jinbhadra's work *Dhyan Shatak* (Book on Meditation consisting of 105-106 couplets).

Couplet 60 of *Dhyan Shatak* by Acharya Jinbhadra presented below in Fig. 2 mentions how a Jain Monk can ride on a chariot consisting of Jewels of Right conduct and hastily travel the path towards *Moksha* or Salvation. The initial stanza in Prakrit is followed by translation into Hindi for better understanding.³ Fig. 3 portrays Jinbhadra emphasizing the praise of Jinendra Tirthankara and those who follow the principles of Jain Agams, Right Conduct (*Shil*) and Control. He considers them as true meditators and followers of Jainism. Jinbhadra also authored *Sangrahani* (Bruhat/Trailokya) which details various calculations explaining various Jain concepts.

Fig 2

तस्स य संतरणसहं सम्महंसण-सुबधणमणगंधं ।
 णाणमयकण्णधारं चारित्तमयं महापोयं ॥५८॥
 संवरकयनिच्छिदं तव-पवणाइद्धजइणतत्तरेगं ।
 वेरगमगण्डियं विसोत्तियावीइनिक्खोभं ॥५९॥
 आरोहुं मुणि-वणिग्या महग्घसीलंगं-रयणपडिपुत्रं ।
 जह तं निव्वाणपुंरं सिग्घमविषेण पावति ॥६०॥

संसार रूपी समुद्र से हमारा चारित्र रूपी वह महापोत ही पर उतार सकता है जिसका कर्णधार ज्ञान हो, इसके छेदों को संवर ने बन्द कर रखा हो, जो तप रूपी वायु के कारण वेगवान हो, जो वैराग्य के मार्ग पर चल रहा हो और दूषित ध्यान की लहरें जिसे शुद्ध नहीं कर पा रही हों। वास्तव में शीलंग रूपी बेहद कीमती रत्नों से भरे हुए चारित्र रूपी महापोत पर चढ़कर मुनिरूपी व्यापारी निर्वाण रूपी नगर तक निर्बाध जा पहुँचते हैं।

Fig 3

जिणसाहूणकित्तण-पसंसणा-विणय-दाणसंपण्णो ।
 सुअ-सील-संजमरआ धम्मज्जाणी मुणेयव्वो ॥६८॥

जिनेन्द्र भगवान और मुनियों के कीर्तन, प्रशंसा, विनय एवं दान से संपन्न होता हुआ जो व्यक्ति श्रुत, शील और संयम में लीन रहता है उसे धर्मध्यानी समझना चाहिए।

Acharya Haribhadra (750 CE) wrote a commentary on the *Avashyak Sutra*, the first Jain *Agam*, in which he refers to this important compilation on *Dhyan* by Jinbhadra, and changed the original name from *Dhyanadhyayan* to *Dhyan Shatak*, as it contains over 100 couplets. Haribhadra, thus obviously had the details of the *18000 Shilang Rath* from Jinbhadra, who compiled it before him. The Chariot calculations can be understood from the text of *Panchashak* (Fig 4) by Acharya Haribhadra where the numbers are mentioned in words and highlighted.⁴ Elaborating on Jinbhadra's work, Haribhadra explains the categories and the calculation numbers. The *18000 Shilang Rath* as shown in An Illustrated Ardhamagadhi Dictionary⁵ is also presented in Fig 5 for comparison and it also gives reference for the image as *Panchashak* by Haribhadra.

Fig 4

श्रीलिंग
संन्यासकं.

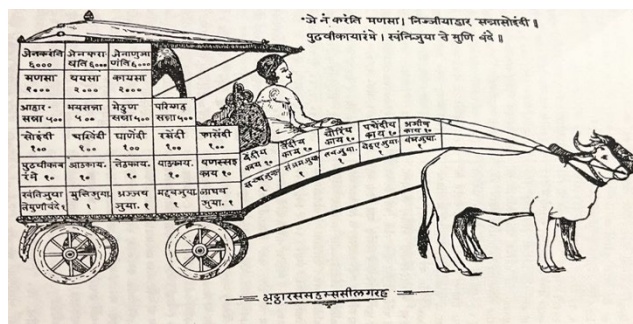
कारणमसिद्धिं श्रुत्वा ॥ ६४३ ॥ एवं पादसं जो सर्वं विप सुप्रमाणो कृपाति । कांठं संवसकां भो भवतिरहं जहं वदति ॥ ६४४ ॥ पितृविकी समस्ता ॥

॥ ४० ॥

॥ अथ चतुर्दशं श्रीलिंगं पञ्चाशकं ॥ १४ ॥

नोमोऽप्य वदमानं शीलसहं समाजसो बोधे । समाप्य सुविचारं पुरुषप्रमाणसो ॥ ६४५ ॥ शीलंगण तस्मा अहं-
 राय एव हीन विपमेयं । भावये समानं अहंकारिचतुषोणं ॥ ६४६ ॥ जोए कृपय तस्या इदिवभूमादिलवचमेयं व । शील-
 आहाराणां अहंकाराणां विपत्ती ॥ ६४७ ॥ कृपादि शिष्ये योग समपादोऽपि उ इति कृपादं । आहारादीनां चउ मया
 इदिपा वंच ॥ ६४८ ॥ मोमादी वच शीला अवीरकाओ व समपण्णो उ । संतादि दसमातो एण इण भाव्या गसा ॥ ६४९ ॥ व
 कोति मणोपाहामया विपवदो उ विपमेय । मोदिमंवेवुदी पुरविकसयामं सेतितुओ ॥ ६५० ॥ इव मरवादिनां पुरविकस-
 ए वरिण इव भया । आहारावदति इव एवो विविवं तु सरे ॥ ६५१ ॥ मोदिरेण एवं मेमेदि वि इव न जो वच । आहाराण्योना
 एव इव मेसादि मरमरु ॥ ६५२ ॥ एवं मणव बहारादिगु एवं नि उमसरसां । वा कर मेसादि वि एव मणवे अहता ॥ ६५३ ॥
 इमे विपमेयं अहंकारं तु बुद्धिमेति । एकेति मुनिमुदं शीलं समम्भात ॥ ६५४ ॥ एको वापरणो-मेरेपपसमंमोअह तु ।
 एवमि तदा एवं मतवचाओ इहदा उ ॥ ६५५ ॥ इहा समण्योपेपि सन्नासज्जाओविरि । तण्णोसमरुवं वा शीरकवच-
 रुवं ॥ ६५६ ॥ एवं च एव एव विरतीमावं एव ददुवं । न उ असीपि पतिं वि मां भावे विवावि अवे ॥ ६५७ ॥ जह

Fig 5



Incidentally, the order of the ten virtues of Jain Dharma is different in current times, as compared to what is described in *Panchashak*. The artwork in Fig. 5 also shows the order in a slightly different manner than listed in the *Panchashak*.

² PhD Thesis on Jinbhadrangani Krut Dhyanshatak evam uski Haribhadraiya Tika Ek Tulnatmak Adhyayan by Priya shraddanjanashree ji, jainelibrary.org, sr no. 003973, Pg 37
³ Dhyan Shatak, Jinbhadra Gani, Jaykumar Jalaj, Manish Modi, jainelibrary.org, sr.no 022098, Pg 21,22
⁴ Panchasak Mulam, Haribhadra Suri, jainelibrary.org, sr.no 020535
⁵ An Illustrated Ardhamagadhi Dictionary, Ratnachandraj, 2nd edition, Motilal Banrasidass 2016, Vol 1 Pg.131

However, the painting, Chariot with calculations, matches completely with the order and names of the ten virtues Jain Dharma listed in the *Panchashak* and shown in Fig 6. Hence, this further establishes that the Chariot with Calculations is based on the *Panchashak* manuscript by Haribhadra of 8th century CE.

Fig. 6

खंती य मद्भवज्जव-मुत्ती तव-संजमे य बोधव्वे ।
सच्चं सोयं आकिंचणं च बंमं च जत्तिधम्मो ॥ १९ ॥

Next, let's now understand the content of the painting Chariot composed of calculations from an unidentified Jain manuscript (Fig. 7), identified here as the 18000 Shilang Rath, from Acharya Haribhadra's Jain manuscript *Panchashak*.

Fig 7



Starting from the bottom, the first line describes the ten virtues of the Jain Dharma, which are to be followed by all Jain Monks and consist of *Kshama*, *Mardav*, *Arjav*, *Muti* (*Aparigraha*), *Tapa*, *Sayam*, *Satya*, *Soch*, *Akinchya* and *Brahmacharya*. Each virtue is described as having the value of one. All these ten virtues should be applied by the monk in his behavior towards living and non-living things, which are described in the second line from the bottom. They are

Prithivikaya, *Apkaya*, *Tapakaya*, *Vayukaya* and *Vanaspatikaya* (all *Ekendriya* beings with one sense), followed by the beings with two senses *Beindriya*, beings with three senses, *Teindriya*, beings with four senses, *Chaurendriya*, and beings with five senses, *Panchendriya*. The last box in the second line from the bottom mentions *Ajivikaya*, which includes primarily matter, and medium of motion, medium of rest, and space. Contemplation on all the living and non-living things was required as part of a monk's *Bhav* meditation or *Dhyan*.

The third line from the bottom highlights the five senses of the various living beings which need to be controlled. They are *Soindi* – Shrut or hearing, *Charindi* - Sight, *Dhaindi* - Smell, *Rasindi* - Taste and lastly *Fasindi* - Touch. The fourth line from the bottom mentions the four *sangnas* which are *Ahar* (food), *Bhaya* (fear), *Maithun* (sex), and *Parigraha* (greed). The fifth line from the bottom mentions the three ways through which we bind *Karma*: *Mana* (mind), *Vachan* (speech), and *Kaya* (body). The top line indicates *Karans* or activities and states that such actions of mind, body, and speech should not be done by one, should not be done through others, nor should such actions be appreciated (*anumodana*). Right conduct or *Samyak Charitra* involves the control of mind, body and speech, five senses, four desires, protection of all living and non-living things, and at all times practicing the ten virtues of Jain Religion and meditating on various concepts of Jainism. Such a behavior leads to supreme *Dhyan* entitling the Jain monks to become a *Bhav Saman*. and swiftly ride on the jewels of his Right Conduct and progress on the path of salvation, aided by his austerities. Haribhadra elaborates the calculations in (Fig 4), as follows: 10 Virtues of Dharma x 10 Categories of Jiva and Ajiva x 5 Indriyas x 4 Sangna x 3 Yoga x 3 Karans =18000 (10*10*5*4*3*3 =18000) and states clearly the number 18000 in *Gatha* 646 and 647 (Fig 4).The stated 18000 *Shilang* calculation by Haribhadra is explained in the table Fig. 8 below:

Fig 8

Line from bottom	Names	Categories	Types	Permutation Value in each box
1	Dharma	Virtues of Religion	10	1
2	Jiva and Ajiva	Living and Non-Living	10	10
3	Indriyas	Senses	5	100
4	Sangna	Desires or Sangnas	4	500
5	Yoga	Mind, Speech, Body	3	2000
6	Karan	Actions to Avoid	3	6000
		Shilang in Panchasak		18000

Jinbhadra in his *Dhyan Shatak*, composed earlier than *Panchashak*, mentions how a Sadhu can get on a boat full of *Shilang* (Right conduct) to cross the ocean of life (Fig. 2, Shloka 60) and reach the city of *Nirvan*, which is shown in the painting here as getting on a chariot of jewels of *Shilang* (Right Conduct) to quickly reach the city of *Nirvan*.

Similar figurative paintings explaining various Jain concepts are widely seen around the time of Acharya Srichandra (1136 CE),⁶ the author of *Sangrahni Ratna*. Srichandra's *Sangrahni Ratna* is a concise version of Jinbhadra's *Sangrahni*. A folio from a copy of Srichandra's manuscript done in 17th century shown below in Fig 9, is available in the British Library (bit.ly/3Grt7ai)

Fig. 9



Folio from the *Sangrahaniratna* by Śrīcandra in Prakrit with interlinear Gujarati commentary. The miniature depicts the Pancaparamēṣṭhins on Siddhasīlā, 17th century (British Library Or 2116C)

The museum identifies the timing as 1400-1450 CE, which is possible, as it is later than the period of Acharya Srichandra of the 12th century CE whose *Sangrahniratna* is based on *Sangrahanī* by Jinbhadra (6th-7th century CE). Collections at Victoria and Albert Museum (bit.ly/3RnuA7x) show more information on *Sangrahaniratna* related to Acharya Srichandra and connect it to Acharya Jinbhadra Gani, as the physical description states: “The work is also named at the end as the Trailokya dipi which is more usually applied to the *Sangrahanī Sutra* of Jinbhadra Gani, the earliest work of this class.” Robert J Del Bonta further clarifies that Srichandra's *Sangrahanī Ratna* is the most illustrated of various *Sangrahanī Sutra* and many of these illustrations are available in private and public collections across the world, mostly found in loose leaf.⁷

Hence, in conclusion, the painting of Chariot composed of Calculations from an unidentified Jain manuscript at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco depicts **18000 Shilang Rath**, based on the Jain manuscript *Panchashak* by Acharya Haribhadra Suri of 8th century CE. The painting is dated to 1400-1440 CE by the museum and is possibly a copy of an illustration around 12th century CE and is a folio from illustrations related to *Sangrahanī* texts.

The above artwork emphasizes the need to carefully collate the details about the various *Granth*s existing in the various *Gyan Bhandars* in the Jain temples across India. Preserving and digitizing such priceless manuscripts should be an important activity that needs to be supported by the Jain community. Also, I hope through this article, I have been able to bring to light the details and history of the hitherto unknown artwork, and that the information is found useful to be shared with the visitors and viewers at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco. I thank the museum for showcasing this beautiful painting and for reaching out to its visitors for more information.

The author is immensely grateful to the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, for graciously allowing free usage of the licensed image. The author would also like to show immense gratitude to the learned Dr Jitendra Shah of Shrut Ratnakar Trust for a valuable discussion on this artwork.

View the Asian Art Museum collection at <https://bit.ly/3R4IKu9>

⁶ Sangrahanī Sutra at Victoria and Albert Museum, UK
⁷ Robert J. Del Bonta CoJS Newsletter March 2013, Issue 8 Pg 47-49

DOING AYMBIL OLI IN BANGKOK

BY YIFAN ZHANG



Yifan Zhang is a Ph D student in Jain Studies, Ghent University, Belgium and a Ph.D. student in Religious Studies, Renmin University of China, China. His Doctorate dissertation topic is “The Jains in Contemporary Southeast Asia(Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore): Their distinctiveness and identities.” Currently he has completed his 4 month fieldwork in Thailand and will undertake 2 months fieldwork in Singapore and 4 months in Malaysia.

Over the course of around one century, the Jain diasporas have dispersed and established communities across many countries worldwide, extending beyond the borders of India. Notably, a significant number of these diasporas have settled in English-speaking nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States, alongside numerous other countries spanning diverse regions globally. Significantly, due to the favorable geographical location and the historical cultural and trade linkages, a considerable number of Jain community members have chosen to reside in prominent cities within the Southeast Asian region in order to pursue their business ventures and advance their careers. The Jains residing in Southeast Asia, constituting a small minority within the cities or regions they inhabit, have devised distinct strategies for navigating cultural space and fostering communal consensus. These approaches are tailored to accommodate their unique lifestyle, religious rituals, and collective identity.

As an earnest devotee of Jain Dharma and doctoral student in Jain Studies, selecting to conduct an ethnography-based study in Southeast Asia enables me to establish a closer connection with the Jain communities residing in various Southeast Asian locales. I am delighted to present my observations, acquired knowledge, and conceptualizations derived from my fieldwork in Southeast Asia. Recently, I have resided alongside the Jain community in Bangkok, Thailand do conduct my fieldwork. Hence, I will commence my account from Thailand.

Ayambil Oli as a method of my approach

One of the notable experiences I would like to highlight is my active engagement in participatory observations at the Ayambil Oli event. At this period, I had the opportunity to intertwine academic fieldwork, spiritual exploration, and the establishment of trust, all from my own perspective and position. As an external type of Jain Tapas, it is said that Ayambil is made to generate bodily, mental, and spiritual benefits for the

Jain believers who actively participate in. The practice of fasting observed throughout the nine-day period of Ayambil Oli entails a personal endeavor to exercise self-restraint in relation to the indulgence in various flavors, with a focus on consuming solely boiled food. The triumph over the influence of taste signifies the achievement of liberation from specific karmic entanglements.



I have been informed through a notice from a WhatsApp account dedicated to event announcements about the occurrence of 2023's on-site communal Ayambil Oli practices at the Śvētāmbara Jain mandir located at Soi Phuttha Osot alley, which is in close proximity to the diamond and gemstone district of Bangkok. Through extensive discussions and consultations with members of the Jain community residing in Bangkok, it has come to my attention that Ayambil Oli is a practice of great significance. However, it is important to note that not all members of the Jain community approach this practice with the same level of sincerity. Only those individuals who demonstrate unwavering commitment and successfully complete the nine-day Ayambil Oli are bestowed with the esteemed reputation of being recognized as a sincere Tapasvi within the community.

Since that moment, I have chosen to undertake the fast as a profound learning experience rooted in Jain Dharma, while also viewing it as an opportunity to immerse myself in Bangkok's Jain community from an anthropological perspective.

The Paryushan festival, which took place earlier, was a highly observed ceremony among Jains. In contrast, the Ayambil Oli is predominantly celebrated by the Śvētāmbara sect of Jainism and is held only within the premises of the Śvētāmbara Jain temple. The rituals which related to Ayambil Oli happened on the 2nd floor of the mandir, with more Bangkok's Jain community members actively engaged in than those non-festive days in between Paryushan and Ayambil Oli, especially those who already made their decisions to go through the whole period, as it is believed that by doing Ayambil Oli fasting, more Punya will be generated, according to the doctrine Karma in Jainism.



I followed the general advice which was informed by the various Jain individuals that eat only once each day, drink boiled water, and avoid eating foods that are regarded "tasty". In addition, Niteshbhai, a prominent figure in Bangkok's Jain community, suggested taking Pachkhan before each meal of Ayambil Tap during the course of the nine days. I was unable to recite the chanting on my own, but with Niteshbhai's guidance I was able to repeat the words after him. My active appearance and involvement of the rituals helped me win some of the first hand credibility for the Tap in the kitchen and also the day after.

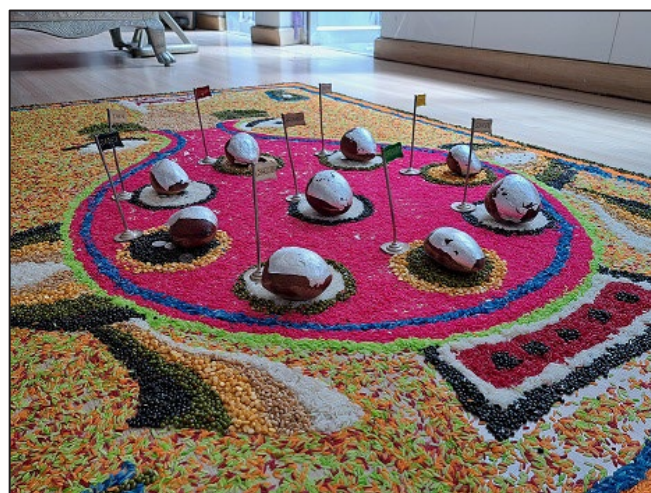
Another devoted member of the Jain community in Bangkok whom I call Sanjaybhai shared his opinion with me: since Jain teachings are largely scientific,

Ayambil Tap is a scientific way to detox body and mind, and in practice, it aids in weight loss and the elimination of some of the cholesterol in the blood. He further put a spotlight on this practice by expressing that meritorious practices which we undertook during the occasion of Ayambil Oli is not anything related to peer pressures and competition, but rather from the inner drive and from the free will. Simultaneously, I consistently expressed my appreciation to Sanjaybhai and his son Siddhartha by use of the term "Anumodana," since the youthful Siddhartha demonstrated his fortitude and will to undertake the entirety of the fasting period with his father.

During the Ayambil Oli, I personally did not encounter any challenges in self-management. My primary objective was to cultivate a mindset aligned with the Jain philosophy of Anekāntavāda. I perceived Ayambil Oli as an opportune period to deepen my understanding of Jain principles and enhance my spiritual growth, both within the Jain community in Bangkok and in interactions with Jains worldwide.

Ayambil Oli as a Socio-Cultural Cohesion Mechanism in Community Dynamics

On the penultimate day of the fasting period, specifically on October 27th, the female members of the Śvētāmbara Jain Sangh in Bangkok congregated at the mandir during the early hours of the morning.



These Jain ladies, known for their refined aesthetic preferences, collaboratively constructed a sand mandala depicting a visually captivating Navpad. Archana Didi, a Jain woman, played a prominent role in orchestrating the creation of the sand Navpad. She humbly expressed that the endeavor was a collective

endeavor rather than solely her own contribution. This sentiment highlights the deep-rooted sense of community that permeates the daily lives of Jain individuals. The Jains, particularly as diasporas, place great value on collective efforts aimed at benefiting the community.

The two-storied mandir located in Soi Phuttha Osot alley is a site where the Bangkok's Śvētāmbara Jain community frequently demonstrates a tacit agreement rooted in communal bonding. Members of the community, irrespective of their gender and age, willingly offer their services for the pursuit of the *ratnatraya*, namely Samya Darsana (right faith), Samyag Jnana (right knowledge), and Samyak Charitra (right conduct), when the need arises.

During significant festivities like Ayambil Oli, women assume a central role in organizing and executing the rituals. During the course of the nine-day period, these women actively engage in the sacred environment of the mandir, devoting themselves to the various tasks associated with the preparations, procedures, and continuous observance of the rituals. They adorn themselves in elegant sarees, thereby enhancing the festive ambiance of the gathering. Their enthusiastic involvement serves as a manifestation of their empowerment and commitment to gender equality within the framework of Jain teachings. Kiran, a Jain woman, demonstrated her aptitude for assisting her husband in the diamond business. I initially encountered her at the Gems & Jewelry Fair in Bangkok, and subsequently encountered her again on the fifth day of Ayambil Oli. On this occasion, she was seated at the rear of the temple, melodiously singing a bhajan in praise of Lord Sambhavanatha. Her resonant voice permeated the humid atmosphere of monsoon-laden Bangkok, resonating throughout the nearby lanes and streets with a distinct Jain vibes. I remarked, "Didi, your melodious voice resonates with a captivating allure, reminiscent of the enchanting melodies that gracefully emanate from the celestial realms of Jain paradise." In response, she graciously expressed, "The Lord is the source of all blessings and divine favor."

The building's kitchen is located on the bottom floor, and while much of the building's activity revolves around the mandir, during Ayambil Oli, the once-quiet kitchen becomes a hub of showing community the adhesion within the Śvētāmbara Jain community in Bangkok. Several members of the community,

including myself as a temporary community member, engaged in the practice of Pachkhans to undergo the Tap. This involved sitting either on the ground or on chairs while waiting for the boiled beans and other food supplements provided for the day. Meanwhile, other community members volunteered to provide Sevā to support the Ayambi Tap practitioners. The dietary choices exhibited a considerable degree of diversity, encompassing a variety of colors and sizes. Interestingly, the Jain acquaintances playfully referred to the cuisine as "pizza" or "falafel," so showcasing their unique sense of humor while being firmly rooted in their religious observances. Moreover, it is evident that there is a prevailing tendency among individuals to demonstrate a strong commitment to maintaining discipline and abiding by established rules and regulations. During the communal dining ritual, when a Tapasvi seeks a suitable place to rest their body, be it upon a chair or in a cross-legged position, they are expected to maintain their chosen posture and the placement of their plate throughout the duration of the dining experience.

During the Ayambil Oli, Jains engage in a meaningful practice that allows them to strengthen their bonds with fellow Jains within the Jain community. This occasion serves as an opportunity for Jains to revitalize themselves spiritually, either through the practice of Tap or the act of Sevā.

Reflection

Ayambil Oli holds great significance as a deeply ingrained Jain practice, particularly within the context of a diasporic community. During this religious observance, Jain community members seize the opportunity to reconnect with their Jain identity, which may be compromised due to the demands of their professional, educational, and everyday lives. Within the context of Bangkok, a vibrant metropolis, the Jain community, characterized by its diasporic nature, assumes a significant role in fostering social cohesion. This cohesive force serves as a vital platform for Jains, who belong to a minority religious group, to establish connections and deepen their understanding of one another.

From my personal standpoint, the successful completion of Ayambil Tap has granted me a sense of legitimacy to delve deeper into my exploration of Jain Dharma and continue my ethnographic research in Southeast Asia.

TAPASWI SHIROMANI DR. JYOTIBEN GANDHI

BY DILIP SHAH



Dilip V Shah of Philadelphia is the past president of JAINA. He is currently serving as chairman of JAINA's Overseas Relations Committee and a member of the Academic Liaison Committee. In addition to being an advisor for Jain Digest, he is also the publisher and General Editor of Jain Avenue magazine – a publication of JAINA India Foundation.

**Jainam Jayati Shashanam!
Tapaswi Amar Raho!
Jainam Jayati Shashanam!
Tapaswi Amar Raho!
Jainam Jayati Shashanam!
Tapaswi Amar Raho!**

These slogans by the jubilant crowds were coming from Gujarati Samaj Hall on a Sunday morning in Queens, New York. The occasion was the Jain Temple of New York's celebration of Dr. Jyotiben Gandhi's Parna of her 100th *Ayambil Oli tapasya*.



The weather that day on October 29, 2023, was unseasonably nice. An elegant procession with drummers, dancers, and singers had just ushered Jyotiben and her family into the hall. She was accompanied by 90 other *tapaswis* who had observed *Aaso* month *Ayambil Oli*. Suddenly the procession turned into a *Garba*. It seemed that the dancing, singing of *stavans*, and blissful smiles that blanketed the hall would never end. Eventually, Jyotiben was led to the stage. All the other *tapaswis* were seated in a specially designated red colored *Mandap* on one side of the stage.

The main program began with a *Manglik* delivered by Shri Nirmal Sagarji. He was followed by Shri

Chandrakant Mehta of NJ, who spoke of the significance and the rarity of the event. The celebration everyone was witnessing was the first such occasion in America – the *Tapasya* event that took 36 years to complete! Jyotiben completed 5,050 *Aayambils* with 100 *Upvas*. A culmination of *tapasya* covering 15 years if one were to undertake the series of *Aayambils* back-to-back without a break.

Now the *Samuh Parna* was to begin. Jyotiben insisted all the *Tapaswis* have their *Parna* before she would begin her own. For Jyotiben's *Parna*, all the *Shravaks* and *Shravikas* got the opportunity to go up on the stage to offer a small amount of food. As they were leaving the stage, they each received *Prabhavna* of a pouch with a package of saffron and *dhoop* and were offered to partake in a "Lucky Draw"- picking a *chit* from a ceremonial bowl that suggested a vow they may take for a duration of their choice.



What is more remarkable is the circumstances under which Jyotiben undertook the journey of *Vardhman Tap Aaradhna*. A ritual in which one consumes only one meal in a day that avoids dairy, fruits, vegetables, oil or ghee, sugar, and most of the spices. It is a practice in which one "eats to live and not live to eat"

by suppressing taste buds (*Rastyag*). In this Aaradhana, one undertakes an ascending number of Aayambils, starting from a single *Aayambil* and going up to 100 consecutive *Aayambils*. She must be considered a supreme example of “Spirituality, Work, and Life Balance”. Her perseverance must inform everyone that if you have a passion and faith in Dharma and are willing to make the effort, nothing is impossible.

In 1987, Jyotiben became an executive committee member of the Jain Center of America (JCA), one of the earliest Jain Sanghs in America. She continued her full-time medical practice, in addition to her religious involvement and managing her home and social life. When she completed her *Nav Pad Oli Aaradhna* in 1987, Jyotiben started *Vardhman Tap Oli*. There was no *ayambil shala* to support her tapasya at that time in NY. So she always cooked her simple ayambil meals along with regular meals for the family, including a son, Neel, and a daughter, Nisha.

Her spiritual journey was supported all along by her husband, Rajnibhai Gandhi, who was the President of the New York Jain Center earlier in 1984. During his presidency, the building was renovated to convert it from a residence to an open-hall temple. JAINA was formed in 1981 in Los Angeles, and a 2nd Biennial Convention was organized at JCA under Rajnibhai’s leadership. The First JAINA Pathshala Conference was hosted at their home, receiving guests from many centers in America. During this time, Jyotiben started religious classes along with others at the Temple and organized Mahavir Jayanti Cultural Programs to involve kids in familiarizing themselves with Jain Dharma and culture.

Jyotiben’s spirituality and knowledge increased under the guidance of Pandit Shree Dhirajbhai Mehta, Shree Kiranbhai Parekh, Dr. Kumarpal Desai, and various other scholars. She started learning the deeper meaning of Sutras. Her active participation in the Jain Center continued for thirteen years: three years as a committee member, six years as a Vice President, and four years as a President from 1996 to 1999. Temple activities increased much during this time as a lot of new *Sadharmiks* arrived to settle in America. Temple was active with visiting scholars’ lectures, observance of *Paryushan* and Chaitya Paripathi Yatras and Pathshala.

Under her leadership, the Temple started sponsoring *Navpad Oli Aaradhna* – the first in any USA temple – in 1996. For their years of leadership and dedication to the Jain Center of America, both Rajnibhai and Jyotiben were honored with the *JAIN RATNA* Award in 2019.

Jyotiben has retired from her medical practice and leadership positions at the Sangh. She spends all her time on personal spirituality and voluntary work at a Senior Center. The couple has been a strong financial supporter of both the JCA and the JTNY temple. They have set up a family foundation with a \$550,000 endowment to continue their charitable and social activities in India for which they raise \$100,000 every year. After the completion of the Vardhman Tap, Shrivak Shiromaṇi Jyotiben is presently considering embarking on *Vees Sthanak Oli* soon. What a strong-willed Shrivika!



Manglk by Shri Nirmalsagarji



THE ART OF GIVING BACK

BY DILIP V. SHAH



Dilip V Shah of Philadelphia is the past president of JAINA. He is currently serving as chairman of JAINA's Overseas Relations Committee and a member of the Academic Liaison Committee. In addition to being an advisor for Jain Digest, he is also the publisher and General Editor of Jain Avenue magazine – a publication of JAINA India Foundation.

This article is third in the series "The Art of Giving Back". We are thankful to Dilipbhai Shah for highlighting the commendable efforts of Adish and Asha Jain from southern New Jersey in reforming sixty villages around Sammet Shikharji.

Adish and Asha Jain – Modern Day Reformers

This is the story of a modern-day reformer couple who sought a lasting change in the lives of twenty thousand people living in a multi-generational cycle of poverty in sixty villages around Madhuban (Shikharji).



Adish (Adishvar) and Asha Jain came from business families. Adish from New Delhi and Asha from Ghaziabad. They got married in 1966 and migrated to the US to pursue higher education. Adish earned a Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering an MBA, and a doctorate. Asha was a linguist and had earned a degree in Interior Design before coming to America.

They settled in rural Iowa in a mostly agricultural area where there was not much demand for linguists or interior designers. So, she obtained a degree in mechanical engineering. For fifty years, both worked for Fortune 500 companies – Asha worked for Honeywell and Adish first as a senior executive for John Deere and later at Danaher as Corporate Director of Global Product Development. In that position, he supervised 800 Indian engineers working on 200 new product developments for 30 Danaher

companies. His service was recognized for saving the company over 100 million Dollars.

In 2014 both Asha and Adish retired. Their son, Samir is a CEO of a Utility consulting company in Houston and his wife Shailavi is a pharmacist. Their daughter, Sapna is a business major, and her husband is a plastic surgeon living in New Jersey just a few blocks from her parents are currently residing. The children urged Adish and Asha to spend their retirement years focusing on helping others less fortunate.

The Jains knew that the root cause of all they achieved in life was education. Based on that realization, they decided to provide quality education opportunities to the children. At that time, they lived in Connecticut and visited some magnet schools in their town. Their offer of help to students economically was politely refused by the schools. Next, the Jains shifted their attention to India. They recalled joining the JAINA pilgrimage to Shikharji in 2001 and witnessing extreme poverty and lawlessness due to the Naxalite movement in the region. As Jains, they were more distraught that the sacred land where twenty of our twenty-four Tirthankaras had attained Nirvana could be in such a pitiable condition. Adish and Asha found their focal point! They just needed some local entity that they could utilize for their dream project.

Adish and Asha did some research and were attracted by two NGOs operating throughout India. "Akshay Patra" - serving mid-day lunches to 2 million school children and "Ekal Vidyalaya" with more than 100,000 rural schools. They attended Ekal's national conference in New York and were very impressed by the vast network of Ekal's dedicated volunteers. Ekal can run each school of 30 students for just \$1 per day! They decided to fund Ekal Vidyalayas in 15 villages near Delhi to learn the details of their operation firsthand. The following year on their visit to India, they visited several Ekal Vidyalayas. They were thoroughly

impressed with what they saw. Thirty boys and girls from 1st to 5th grade were studying in an open area. The students were motivated, could recite multiplication tables up to 20, could perform multiplications and divisions, and read & write in both Hindi and English. They were learning about our heritage, culture, and good hygiene practices. Most students attended Government school and attended Ekal Vidyalaya for additional coaching. Their teacher was typically a woman of the same village and was getting paid Rs 1,000 a month. This was her supplemental income, and she was happy to teach since she was helping the children from her village.

Now that they had completed their research, they decided to focus on the villages in Shikharji. They discussed their idea of Integrated Village Development with Ekal Foundations' Rameshbhai and Kokilaben Shah of Houston, Texas.

Because of the newness of the idea with extremely ambitious goals, Ekal Foundation did not adopt it but agreed to cooperate with Adish and Asha Jain for their vision of self-reliant villages in Shikharji in 5 years. They were fortunate to be able to recruit an IIT-Bombay graduate, Anurag, who had recently joined Ekal.

Adish and Asha, now aided by Anurag became AAA! They conducted an exhaustive survey of villages around Shikharji. The survey informed them that they needed to focus on meeting the basic needs of the villagers; not just the primary education of their kids. So, they decided to adopt 60 villages near Madhuban (Shikharji) with a population of 20,000 and to launch a community of Self-Reliant Villagers. Keeping in mind their age, Adish and Asha projected it as a 5-year plan focusing on Primary Education, Computer Education, Women Empowerment, Poshan Vatikas, and Healthcare.

The community leaders and advisors tried to tell them that it was not a realistic goal. Conventional wisdom states that social changes occur gradually. Societies have traditions, economic compromises, social norms, etc., maintaining a status quo. Individuals are cautioned to remain within the established societal order or suffer the consequences. But throughout history, societies have changed. Some changes are forced - imposed by climate, economic upheavals, demands for justice, or militant revolutions, while other changes are led by social reformers like

Gandhiji. Our AAA team, armed with a superb educational background, corporate expertise, and a sense of urgency to shake things up, ignored the conventional wisdom and proceeded with IVD - the Integrated Village Development Scheme to help villagers become self-reliant.

At the end of 5 years (2017- 2022) of IVD initiatives, the 5 focused areas registered these achievements:

1) Primary education: enrolling 1,755 children of the 60 villages into Ekal Vidyalayas. This resulted in quality education, an increasing literacy rate from 42% to 64%, and higher attendance.



Ekal Vidyalay

2) Computer Education: Computer lab 269 students. Since some villages are as far apart as 25 Kilometers, Ekal on Wheels programs provide computer education to 453 students registering 52% digital literacy. 100% of households now have smartphones and digital connectivity.

3) Women Empowerment: Through a main tailoring lab and 8 satellite centers 1,273 women learned to make clothes for their family members and earned an income of 2,000 Rs a month by tailoring for the villagers – a growth of women earners from 2% to 48%.

4) Poshan Vatikas: Instead of depending on a single crop, 90% of households were provided with seeds and seedings and taught organic farming in their backyards providing nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables resulting in better health, and supplemental income for the family of Rs 4,000 a month by selling excess produce in the market.



Ekal Poshan Vatika

5) Healthcare: 100% of households engaged as Arogya Sevikas for wall writings to promote the use of toilets and soak pits resulting in a reduction of open defecation from 85 % to 1% promoting cleanliness. Sevikas promote herbal medicines, natural childbirths, and reduced cases of Anemia.

Due to the IVD initiatives, the average income level of the families rose from Rs 45,000 to Rs 76,000, a 47% increase.

Ekal team in the Shikharji area is headed by Amit Anand who has an MBA and was living in Patna. He was in marketing before joining Ekal. Being from Patna, he has earned the trust and respect of the villagers. On his motorcycle, he constantly visits the villages and helps the villagers resolve their problems beyond Ekal programs. As an example, when one of the villagers died of a heart attack the family wanted to throw his wife Lalita Devi, and the children out of the house. On Amit's recommendation, Adish and Asha provided financial help to Lalita Devi in opening a shoe shop to support her family. Similarly, when a villager died in a bike accident, Amit found that his son Virat had defects in his legs by birth. Adish and Asha provided financial support for proper treatment. Today Virat can walk and run easily. Through Amit's advice, over 20 families have been helped over time. Today villagers consider Amit as part of their family.

As the initial goals of the IVD project have been met, new challenges are opening. The focus is shifting to higher education. Students do well till 6th grade due to coaching by Ekal Vidyalaya but beyond that, they suffer due to lack of teachers for Mathematics, Science, and English. Adish and Asha's focus has shifted to the students from 7th through 10th grade.

Currently, 311 students are getting training, and the plan is to cover all 60 villages by year-end and provide online training for 11th and 12th grade students for college entrance examinations using an e-learning app.

The Poshan Vatika program is being enlarged and 10 self-help groups across 60 IVD villages to utilize available Govt. initiatives to further improve their income and promote entrepreneurship among the members of the groups.

When Adish and Asha visited Shikharji villages in early 2023, they were surprised to see 700 villagers came to Madhuban to meet them and share their stories on how Ekal IVD had transformed their lives. They brought with them produce from their Poshan Vatikas. Women who previously were focused primarily on raising the family were now earning supplemental income from the clothes they made and becoming equal partners in the family. They thanked the couple and mentioned Adish as Lord Ram and Asha as Devi Sita. The couple was surprised when a young girl asked them why their foundation was named Adish and Asha Jain Foundation and not Asha and Adish Jain Foundation! A prime example of how education can build confidence in women.

Beyond the Shikharji area, Adish and Asha have a million-dollar commitment to build an Akshay Patra Kitchen to serve 100,000 mid-day meals to children in Ghaziabad by the end of 2024. Also, provide state-of-the-art equipment for cataract surgery at Lions Eye Hospital in Ghaziabad and coaching for girls in Ghaziabad to become Engineers and Doctors. They help other educational programs in and around New Delhi. As an example, they are providing coaching to 400 slum children in Okhla, South Delhi through Project Why. This has helped them achieve 100% graduation. Most of them are pursuing college education.

Adish and Asha are not done yet. They have many more goals on their mind. It is for us to figure out what makes this couple tick. Is it helping the motherland? Are they serving Jainism by uplifting the Shikharji area? Or are they passionate about education?

Adish and Asha live in South Jersey and can be reached at adishashajain@gmail.com

MALALA YOUSAFZAI: A FEARLESS VOICE OF FREEDOM

By REENA SHAH



Reena is the section editor of the Inspiration section of Jain Digest. She has a Ph. D. in English literature and a USC grad. She currently teaches English to high school students. Teaching has always been a passion and she loves to read and write. She is dedicated to lifelong learning and continuing education. Her industry experience includes Market Research, Non-Profit, and educational institutions. She practices deeper aspects of spirituality and is a follower of the Late Param Pujya Pappaji at Shrimad Rajchandra Aatma Tatva Research Centre, Parli, Near Mumbai.

"I tell my story, not because it is unique, but because it is not. It is the story of so many girls." - Malala

As an activist, advocate for girls' education, champion of human rights and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Malala's words and actions offer inspiration and hope to people all over the world. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, jointly with Kailash Satyarthi, for her struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education. Her message has been that children's right to education is the foundation for peace, and an important measure in the fight against extremism. She is a supporter of non-violence, even in the face of threats and attacks by her opponents.



Education

Born on July 12, 1997, Malala was naturally intelligent and curious as a young child and had an innate respect for education. She was an excellent student. Not only her parents, but other adults in her life all seemed to know

that young Malala would be different. As a girl living in Pakistan, though she had limited choices, her parents supported her education, against the cultural norms. While the world around Malala had spun completely out of control and was torn by war and chaos, she continued to write and promote education fearlessly.

After moving to England in October 2012, from March 2013 to July 2017, Yousafzai was a student at the all-girls Edgbaston High School in Birmingham. She studied Geography, History, Mathematics and Religious Studies here. Also applying to Durham University, the University of Warwick, and the London School of Economics (LSE), Yousafzai was interviewed at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford in December 2016 and given conditional admission and in August 2017, she was accepted to study Philosophy, Politics and Economics. On 19 June 2020, Yousafzai said after passing her final examinations that she had completed her PPE degree at Oxford; she graduated with honors.

Courage – Using the Power of Words

Malala's father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, an outspoken social activist, and educator, had established and administered Khushal Girls High School and College in the city of Mingora. He encouraged Malala to follow in his path. On September 1, 2008, when Malala was 11 years old, her father took her to a local press club in Peshawar to protest the school closings, and she gave her first speech— "How Dare the Taliban Take Away My Basic Right to Education?" Her speech was publicized throughout Pakistan.

In early 2009, Malala started to blog anonymously on the Urdu language site of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). She wrote about life in the Swat Valley under Taliban rule, and about her desire to go to school. Using the name "Gul Makai," she described being forced to stay at home, and she questioned the motives of the Taliban. Malala was 11 years old when she wrote her first BBC diary entry. Under the blog heading "I am afraid," she described her fear of a full-blown war in her beautiful Swat Valley, and her

nightmares about being afraid to go to school because of the Taliban. Her voice grew louder, and over the course of the next three years, she and her father became known throughout Pakistan for their determination to give Pakistani girls access to a free quality education. Her courage was evident in her response to Taliban through the spoken and written word. She questioned their ways to silence a woman/individual's right to education.

But not everyone supported and welcomed her campaign to bring about change in Swat. Fighting Taliban singlehandedly was not an easy endeavor. While doing so she inspired millions of people. Malala told the UN that she would not be silenced by terrorist threats. "Let us pick up our books and our pens. They are our most powerful weapons. One teacher, one book, one pen, can change the world," Malala said.

Empathy, Non-Violence, and Forgiveness

Nobel laureate Malala continues to inspire in a world where persistent inequalities in education cripple the lives of millions of women and girls. In 2012 when she stood up against Taliban gunmen while advocating the right to education for girls in her native Pakistan, Taliban shot her in the head and neck. Not only did she survive, but also continued to relentlessly pursue her education and her selfless work. She fought back in a non-violent manner and realized that her voice was extremely crucial for the change that she wanted to see.

In her first public speech at the United Nations since being shot in the head by the Taliban, she said she was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's path of non-violence. Malala invoked Gandhi and other global advocates of non-violence stressing that, "I'm not against anyone, neither am I here to speak in terms of personal revenge against the Taliban, or any other terrorist group." "I'm here to speak about the right of education for every child, I raise up my voice – not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. We cannot succeed when half of us are held back." "I want education for the sons and daughters of all the Taliban and all the terrorists and extremists. I do not even hate the Talib who shot me. Even if there is a gun in my hands and he stands in front of me, I would not shoot him." "This is the philosophy of non-violence that I have learnt from Gandhiji, Badshah Khan and Mother Teresa," the 16-year-old said. Non-violence is in fact the highest moral virtue. This concept of forgiveness and non-violence is the basis of Jain philosophy. It is the best way to heal, progress, and gives us the ability to understand others' point of view.

Humility

In a rare instance, Angelina Jolie, a special envoy for the UN refugee agency, said that when Malala was in the hospital her father saw a poll in the newspaper that listed 10 of the most influential people in the world. Malala was number six; President Barack Obama was number seven. He showed her the poll and said, "Look at this! Doesn't this make you happy?" Malala answered. "No. I don't think human beings should be categorized in such a way!" "So we can learn a lot from this girl," Jolie said. It is extremely rare to see this level of humility in people and seeing that in such a young girl is extraordinary indeed. Her fame and accolades did not affect her at all. Humble by nature, Malala never takes credit for her accomplishments but instead sees her cause as bigger than herself. She selflessly promotes the right to an education for all.

According to Jainism, compassion and humility is at the root of mercy. It is the cause of unblemished conduct and is beneficial to all. It is superb amongst all the virtues, and vows and self-control are fulfilled and exercised only with compassion or humility. Malala shook the world, not through the might of her ego, or her considerable skills, but through her breathtaking capacity for inner transformation and humility.

Compassion and Generosity

To help more young children gain access to education, Malala started the Malala Fund in 2013. Over 130 million girls between the age of 6 to 17 worldwide are out of school to work, take care of younger siblings, or just because the rights of education were taken away from them. The Malala Fund is dedicated to "fighting to give back to girls what poverty, war and discrimination tried to take away" (<https://www.malala.org/>). The Malala Fund ensures young girls to twelve years of free and safe education. This fund is to provide financial supports of girls' education to disadvantaged places around the world. The organization also delivers the stories of other young people who are fighting for a right to education and inspires young girls for changes. The Malala Fund represents women oppressed by religion, misogyny, and gender segregation, and shows other young girls' story of "girls [being] neglected, denied education, physically mistreated, [and] sexually abused..." (<https://www.malala.org/>). This fund also empowers young girls around the world to fight for what they believe in and keep going to school. Not only does Malala make a change, but she inspires others to make one too. In 2014, through the Malala Fund, she traveled to Jordan to meet Syrian refugees, to Kenya to meet young female students, and finally to northern Nigeria for her 17th

birthday. In Nigeria, she spoke out in support of the abducted girls who were kidnapped earlier that year by Boko Haram, a terrorist group which, like the Taliban, tries to stop girls from going to school.

Today, the Malala Fund has become an organization that, through education, empowers girls to achieve their potential and become confident and strong leaders in their own countries. Funding education projects in six countries and working with international leaders, the Malala Fund joins with local partners to invest in innovative solutions on the ground and advocates globally for quality secondary education for all girls. According to Jainism both *Abhay daan* and *gyan daan* are important. It reflects one's compassion for others, welfare of other souls, and is a great way to practice non-possession (*aparigrah*). Malala practices both *abhay daan* (helping and providing shelter to people to make them fearless) and *gyaan daan* (educating girls and empowering them with the knowledge that everyone has the right to education) in her own selfless way.

Accolades

The most well-known recognition Malala received is the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014. At age 17, she became the youngest person to receive this prize. Accepting the award, Malala reaffirmed that "This award is not just for me. It is for those forgotten children who want education. It is for those frightened children who want peace. It is for those voiceless children who want change." It is noteworthy that she received **24 awards** just in 2013. This clearly shows that Malala's passion for education, her courage, compassion, generosity have been noticed by the whole world. In all she received more than 50 awards and honors from various organizations and governments between 2011 and 2022 which include several peace awards, courage awards, person of the year award, youth awards, global thinker award, leadership award, freedom of thought award for her book "I am Malala" etc.

Future Hopes and Aspirations

Malala's message in her calm and powerful voice on International Women's Day is an appropriate end to this short article. Her compassion, confidence, and selflessness are indicators of a great soul. Her passion on the women's education movement as a tool for liberation is groundbreaking as she lives in an area of conflict and turmoil where women had been oppressed for generations and lacked access to healthcare, education, employment and much more. Her bravery supported others when her society was designed to tear her down. Her movement inspired people around the

world for courage, endurance, and compassion. She continues to advocate for equal right for women: "From harassment to inequality, to discrimination based on their gender, to unequal pay, all of these things are important and we need to keep working on it. But I also want to take this moment to remind all of those amazing and incredible women out there just to take a break," she said. "(Women) have done so much, and right now some of them are studying from home, some of them are looking after their kids and they are parenting, and they also have jobs to do. There is so much on their shoulders, and they carry all of that with grace and with dignity, so be proud of yourself, be proud of all you have done and achieved in your life. Let's celebrate and be proud of who we are and what we have done for women and everyone around us."

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Am I Good Enough? - Resolving Self-Esteem Issues with Jain Psychology

By Suraj Shah



Suraj Shah is a dedicated Clinical Psychologist and ardent seeker of wisdom in Jainism and Vedanta. Based in Mumbai, he serves as a Psychotherapist and Educator, channeling his passion into harmonizing contemporary psychological concepts with the profound insights found in Jainism, Buddhism, and Vedantic schools of thought. Specializing in addressing psychological conflicts arising from the premature application of religious concepts, Mr. Shah is committed to fostering a nuanced understanding of the intersection between spirituality and mental well-being. Email: mentalhealthwithsuraj@gmail.com

The quest for self-esteem is an innate longing shared by all human beings. At the very core of anxiety and depressive disorders lies the belief that "I am not good enough." In this article, we shall explore how the applied psychology of Jainism liberates us from the relentless pursuit of external validation to fulfill this fundamental need and the void it creates within us.

onto these finite aspects and becomes outwardly focused in its quest to feel good. In its true essence, the *jeeva* is formless and possesses limitless esteem, independent of skill, accomplishment, or fame. Yet, the *jeeva* forgets its true nature due to the obscuring influence of "*darshan mohaniya karma*." It mistakenly identifies with the name and form of the mind-body complex and attributes its inherent boundless worth to these limited aspects, thus endlessly seeking validation from the finite.



The perpetual quest for more success, additional wealth, or increased fame stems from a fundamental aspect of our nature: our intrinsic worth is boundless and cannot be fully satisfied by limited, conditional achievements. The insatiable desire for more is rooted in projecting our infinite esteem onto the restricted framework of our name, form, mind, and body. Consequently, the search for validation outside of ourselves becomes limitless and never-ending.

Every human being enters this world with an inherent desire to feel valued and worthy. From the mightiest *Indra* (Celestial Being) to the most ordinary individual, each seeks to bask in their own sense of worthiness. Modern psychology often takes this yearning for granted, advising individuals to pursue it through rational and sensible means. However, Jainism challenges the very existence of this need.

It's important to acknowledge that wanting to feel esteemed is entirely natural. However, the issue lies in the direction of this pursuit. Instead of recognizing and appreciating our inherent, boundless worth, we often mistakenly channel our efforts into seeking validation through external achievements. This misdirection perpetuates a cycle of endless searching, as the limited nature of external accomplishments can never fully satiate the infinite esteem that resides within us.

Where does this need for self-esteem originate? According to Jainism, it arises from the attachment to limited names and forms. The soul, known as '*jeeva*,' projects its intrinsic nature of boundless self-worth

Ask yourself, what makes you feel good about yourself? Is it your appearance, educational qualifications, intelligence, wealth, job title, or social connections? These external sources of esteem are closely tied to the mind and body, making them susceptible to fluctuations. They are transient, subject to situational variations, and at the mercy of destiny. This association renders our self-esteem fragile and vulnerable, easily shaken by a job demotion or a social snub.

Jainism offers a path to anchor ourselves in an unshakable source of self-esteem—our true essence, the "*atman*." When the *jeeva* experientially recognizes that it is neither the body nor the mind, it liberates itself from the limited identity linked to names and forms. Instead, it experiences its unconditional self-worth as the realized "siddha" itself.

Yes, you heard it right—you are no less than a siddha! In your true essence, you are an unconditionally complete and infinitely esteemed soul. Nothing can be added to or taken away from your worth. This profound self-awareness acts as an anchor, providing you with unwavering self-esteem. Self-esteem, in this sense, is paradoxical because the experience of self is, in itself, an experience of infinite self-worth.

When you are wearing a wristwatch, will you identify yourself with the watch by saying "I have a watch" or "I am the watch"? The phrase "I have a watch" is more accurate, right? While the watch may age or you may replace it with a newer watch, notice that the "I" remains a constant.

Consider the distinction between the belief "I am young and beautiful" and the perspective "I have a young and beautiful body." When we acknowledge our ability to observe the body, akin to how we observe a wristwatch, it becomes evident that we are not synonymous with the body; rather, we possess it. This realization emphasizes the separation between our true self and the physical form we inhabit. The body may undergo changes, but "I am" remains a constant. When we shift our perspective to "I have the body," from "I am the body", we free ourselves from the confinement of identifying exclusively with the body. This change in perspective allows us to recognize that the body is something we possess rather than something that defines our entire identity.

Let's take a moment to reflect on the sources from which we often seek our self-esteem. We might find ourselves feeling good and worthy because of our youth or looks, which is rooted in the underlying belief that "I am my body." Alternatively, it could be our intelligence that gives us a sense of worth, based on the underlying belief that "I am my mind." Others may derive their self-esteem from exceptional job performance, equating competence with their identity, believing "I am the competent mind with valuable skills." Then there's the pursuit of self-esteem through

material possessions like money and a car, built upon the notion that "this is mine."



The challenge with deriving self-esteem from psychological traits, such as intelligence or specific skills, lies in their inherent relativity to societal norms. For instance, skills that are considered valuable today might become outdated over time. Additionally, intelligence or proficiency in a particular area is always subject to comparison – there will invariably be someone deemed more intelligent or skilled. Relying on such variables for self-esteem poses a precarious situation. Since these standards are relative and subject to change, basing one's self-worth on them can lead to a fragile sense of esteem. When external benchmarks fluctuate, it becomes challenging to maintain a stable and positive self-perception.

However, when we reframe our perspective, we realize that we do not need to tie our self-worth to these variable and relative factors. Instead, we can shift to a more liberating view:

"I have a mind and body. I am not the mind and body."

"I have money and a car, but they belong to me for a finite time. Once this body ceases to exist, they no longer belong to me."

"My self-esteem is not defined and limited to these possessions."

In essence, I am the formless principle that transcends the limitations of my mind and body, which were born and will ultimately pass away. This realization liberates us from the ever-changing and impermanent aspects of our existence, leading us to a deeper understanding of our true, timeless nature.

Dive deep into the inquiry of what "I am" truly means. "I am this" or "I am that" is a false identification, tethering "I am" to external circumstances for its worth. In its genuine sense, "I am" is eternally whole and complete. The realization of this truth liberates us from seeking morsels of validation within the cycle of samsara.

Imagine a person tasked with delivering a presentation in front of a crowd. Despite diligent practice and possessing all the necessary skills, this individual still feels a sense of anxiety. Where does this anxiety originate?



The anxiety in this scenario is rooted in the fear of losing self-esteem in the eyes of the audience if the presentation doesn't go perfectly. It also arises from the desire to gain more self-esteem by delivering an exceptional performance. This person's self-worth is tied to external validation, which hinges on their ability to perform exceptionally well.

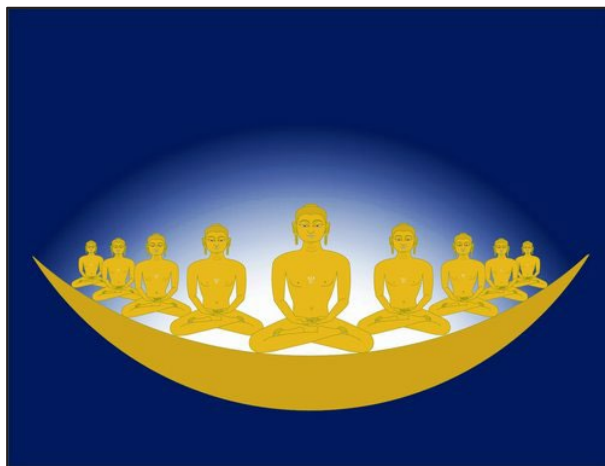
Now, let's envision an alternate scenario where this person has attained "*Samyak Dristhti*," a state of self-realization in Jainism, recognizing their true self as the formless "*Atman*." In this state of enlightenment, they understand that their core identity is unchanging and indestructible. They realize that nothing can be added to or taken away from their true essence.

As a result of this profound realization, their self-esteem is no longer fragile and contingent on

performing well or poorly. They find themselves anchored to an unshakable source of self-esteem. This newfound awareness brings immense relief. In this state of enlightenment, this individual can deliver the presentation with a sense of joy, free from the constant worry of losing or gaining self-esteem. The act of presenting becomes a process they can genuinely enjoy, and they are no longer burdened by the fear of judgment or the need for external validation.

This shift in perspective allows them to approach the presentation with a sense of inner peace, fully aware that their self-worth is not dependent on the opinions of others. Their focus shifts from seeking esteem from external sources to realizing that they are already complete and esteemed in their true nature, the formless *atman*. This realization empowers them to embrace the task with confidence and serenity.

It's like beggars seeking alms from other beggars. Humanity, in its entirety, roams with a void of self-esteem, searching for validation from others who are equally lacking in self-esteem, fundamentally due to their ignorance about their true selves. Indeed, we are blessed to have encountered the path of the Jina, which liberates us from the relentless pursuit of self-worth through the transient offerings of the world.



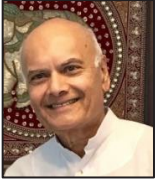
This path guides us towards the realization of the ever-existing, unconditional source of self-esteem that resides within the very essence of our being—the formless, enlightened nature of the "*siddha swaroop atma*." It offers us a profound understanding of our true, unchanging, and esteemed self, freeing us from the limitations and anxieties associated with external validation. In this wisdom, we find the ultimate source of peace and self-assurance.

Introspection Worksheet

After reading the article, it's crucial to introspect. This will allow you to absorb the content at a deeper level and will help you maintain self-esteem when facing ever-changing conditions of mind and body in our materialistic world.

- List three external factors that you commonly associate with your self-esteem (e.g., appearance, job performance, social status etc.) Consider how these external factors have impacted your perception of self-worth over time.
- Have these factors resulted in an enduring self-esteem, or have you found that, after achieving a certain level of success, there was a subsequent desire to attain an even higher level for continued validation and self-esteem?
- Did your self-esteem feel threatened when you observed someone possessing a higher degree, a better salary, or a more luxurious car than yours?
- Do you experience concerns about the possibility of demotion or the loss of success?
- Are you preoccupied with the need for validation from others or distressed by the potential impact of someone's mockery diminishing your sense of self-worth?
- If someone praises your intelligence and you receive a salary increase for your competence at work, does it genuinely add something substantial to your being, aside from practical benefits such as increased income? Does the praise truly add anything to the essence of your existence as a formless being (siddha swaroop atma)?
- Conversely, if someone criticizes your perceived lack of intelligence and you experience a job demotion, does it genuinely diminish something substantial from your being, beyond the monetary aspect? Does the criticism truly reduce you to anything less than a formless being (siddha swaroop atma)?
- Is it worthwhile to maintain such a dependency on external factors for your sense of self-worth?
- How would you respond if someone conveyed to you that your worth extends beyond the confines of man-made definitions of success and worth, which are contingent on specific situations, and that your value is unconditional—unaffected by any specific actions or inactions? Would such a perspective liberate you from the preoccupation with external validation?
- How would your emotions be affected if you come to the realization that your worth is not something to be earned but is ever-present, intrinsic to your true essence beyond the limitations of mind and body?
- If I am not the body, nor the mind, and not defined by its actions, then who am I? Please note that this is not merely an intellectual question but serves as the starting point for embarking on an experiential journey into self-realization.

GOING BEYOND SELF-IMPROVEMENT BY RAMESH KHANDHAR



Ramesh Khandhar is a former secretary of the executive board and past head teacher of Pathshala at Jain Center of Southern California. He travels around to deliver spiritual discourses and continues to do intense introspection and contemplation. Currently, he is serving as Section Editor and Advisor of Jain Digest. (ramesh.khandhar@gmail.com)

(Portions of this article are based on a talk by Shai Tubali titled “The difference between Self-Improvement and Spiritual Transformation” on Insight Timer app.)

Our Saints and Gurus teach us that we are not just this body but an eternal, peaceful, powerful soul. They teach us to contemplate and meditate on “Who am I” to realize that we are much more than our body and mind. By meditating on “I am” we can sense and experience that we are as big as the universe. And that is the truth, not an imagination to make us feel good about ourselves. It is simply our true size which on a daily basis we cannot comprehend in our mind. We don’t believe that we are that big and function from that bigness or identify with it fully. And because we don’t believe in it, we shrink ourselves back to a normal size that we and the society can handle.

The entire spiritual journey is about returning to our true identity, to remain like that, to live like that and being able to say this is what I am and not a tiny body and mind.

Many seekers that have spent several years in their spiritual pursuit feel that they are running in circles. They say, “I feel like every day I start my spiritual journey all over again. There is more and more change in my behavioral pattern, my passions are reducing, my relationships are better. But the journey feels endless. Since there is no end to improvement, how can I feel that there is nothing more to work on, the journey is complete, and I have reached the state of self-realization?”

On a regular basis we look at our shortcomings and put more efforts to become more sensitive, more compassionate, more loving, more accepting, more tolerant. We learn to open our chakras, stay in the now, become more mindful, less occupied, etc. These things are endless. There is always some pattern to look at, something to improve upon. Life is very dynamic and new situations continue to challenge us. There is always something that we have to resolve in our relationships, and we can always learn to love more, be more sensitive

But the question is do these things ever end? Does such improvement lead us to an experience who we are? When we are focused on self-Improvement, we are looking into the future to find out where is that point when I can say I have reached my goal. We can make ourselves better, but not be finished with it – until of course we achieve *Keval Gyan*; which is a much advanced spiritual state.

Self-Realization, which is a near-term goal of an aspirant, is not about “the what”; it is about “the who”. It asks for spiritual transformation. In self-Improvement we are trying to change “the what” – our mental, emotional, behavioral characteristics. The focus is on making our existence, our current form (*pariyay*) better. Whereas in spiritual transformation, we are transforming; meaning we are becoming something completely different – just the way the caterpillar changes into a butterfly. Although the efforts we do to improve ourselves are essential to reach a level purity that is required for reaching our goal of self-realization, we need to go beyond that.

We have to realize that we are not what we think we are. We have to make efforts to change our identity to a higher level. We have to constantly grow in our sense of identity. Why is that important? Because who you believe you are changes your entire mindset, emotions, behavior. If you believe that you are a tiny human being that has some memories, hopes, fears, traumas and achievements and one day you are going to die; then it changes how you feel, what you think is important in life, what makes you happy, what makes you satisfied, and what makes you miserable.

However, when you realize that this identity of a tiny version of you is wrong, then everything that matters to this tiny version of you – the memories, traumas, relationships - just disappears to a certain degree. This is like cutting the roots of a tree instead of cutting the branches. Self-Improvement is like cutting the branches. When we are trying to get rid of our ego, anger, likes, dislikes; it is like trying to cut the branches. They grow again and may appear in a different form. Hence there is no end to it. We keep polishing ourselves and trying to make it into a shining diamond but forgetting that we are already that diamond!

It is necessary to recognize that we need to make a big shift. All the energy we need to invest is in realizing our true identity. On one level of consciousness (*pariyay*) you have traumas. On another level of consciousness (*dravya*) – the True Self – there are no traumas. Any of the traumas that you may have at *pariyay* level never touch the *dravya* level. Your true self is not time bound. It does not change with time. It is not subject to the laws of evolution.

Self-improvement is like a dirt road which takes you up to a certain point. Spiritual transformation is like a highway which takes you directly to what needs to be transformed in you. It is not your pattern, it's you! When we experience deep spiritual states such as light, silence, grace, etc; those are instances when we get a glimpse of what we really are. However, these experiences are also temporary. They come and go. We experience silence and go back to noise. We experience light and then fall into the darkness of our patterns. We do not transform – become someone else. There is no “earthquake” that takes place at the core of our being.

For such an earthquake to occur our attention has to be placed on our true self. In all our experiences we need to ask who is the knower of these experiences. When you start asking such questions, you are taking the highway and disconnecting from your other identity. When you start focusing on the owner of consciousness and not the content of consciousness, then at a certain point the “I am” becomes disconnected from everything else and it is just a pure presence. When that pure presence is revealed the first feeling that you have is, “I am free, and I always have been free!”

Then you realize that as a pure soul, you do not have to go through the process of self-improvement that your body and mind need to go through. The body and mind are part of the time bound process, but not you. You realize that you do not need to go through this process, which means that you do not need to search anymore. In the process of self-improvement, a certain identity of a seeker is formed. “I am a seeker. I search. I search.” But your true self has nothing to do with the seeker. “I am” has nothing to do with the seeker. It is not searching. And when you realize that; the searching stops because the search is never going to lead to an answer. With this realization the joy you feel is endless. You do not need to work at improving anything, completing anything!

The question is, do you believe that? Or do you think I still have to accept myself? When you are beginning to shift your identity, you realize that the concept of self-acceptance does not exist at the higher level. Self-acceptance is also an endless process as there is always something that can be improved upon. There is no need to accept yourself when you are free.

Spiritual transformation is not about giving up self-improvement completely. It is only saying that self-improvement has its place in the spiritual development process but it by itself will not lead to spiritual transformation. A gradual shift in your spiritual identity, breaking free from your identification with body and mind is needed for the transformation.

Where do you start? Many spiritual masters who have gone

can do. We provide you a list of some of those practices that help in separating our true self from the body and mind.

- Cultivate a belief that you are not the body, mind, thoughts, emotions, etc. You are a pure, eternal soul. As Dr. Wayne Dyer had stated “You will see it when you believe it.”
- Ask a direct question “Who am I?” Continue to contemplate on it, meditate on it.
- Contemplate on who you are not – “I am not my clothes. I am not my possessions. I am not the body. I am not the mind. I am not my thoughts. I am not my emotions.” Go deep into the sense of “I am”. This will lead you to enter a state which cannot be verbalized; but can be experienced.
- In every experience you go through during the waking hours, ask “Who is the knower of this experience?” For example, when you look in the mirror, say, “What I see in the mirror is not me; I am that who sees.”
- Do the triangle experiment. For example, when you are eating, at one point of the triangle is the food, at the second point is your body/mind which is enjoying the food, and at the third point is your true self which is only an observer of the other two points. Focus on the observer. Say “I am just a witness to this
- Use the analogy of a screen. You are just like a screen where various scenes are displayed; but the screen is not affected by these scenes.
- Think of a clear crystal with red flower nearby. The crystal will appear red but the nature of the crystal has not changed. The crystal assumes its nature as soon as the red flower is removed. Similarly all emotions, passion simply reflect on the knowledge screen (true self's attribute). We are not what is being reflected but we are just the 'knower'. Only in the presence of 'pure knowing' we experience the blissful nature of true self.



Quote by Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji

PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF: GEORGIA TECH OFFERS JAIN FOOD

By HRUDAY SHAH



Hruday Shah is a Junior student at Georgia Tech. He is a devout Jain and follows strict Jain restrictions. During Paryushan, Hruday shows his determination and respect by fasting with just boiled water. He has attended the Jain education and Gujarati language classes at Jain Center of New Jersey (JCNJ) since first grade. He has been continuously among the top students in the temple and has won numerous awards for ranking in the top three. He also has represented JCNJ nationally in the Jaina Academic Bowl.

Throughout my life, Jain diet has been an integral part of my identity and daily routine. My journey from a childhood steeped in the Jain tradition to my current pursuit of Aerospace Engineering at Georgia Tech has been a remarkable one, made possible by my commitment to maintaining my dietary practices.

Growing up in a Jain household, I learned from a young age the importance of adhering to the principles of non-violence (ahimsa) and mindfulness in my dietary choices. My family instilled in me the value of vegetarianism and abstaining from foods like onions, garlic, and potatoes. These restrictions, which some may perceive as limitations, have always been a source of strength and connection to my heritage.

As I approached the crucial decision of where to pursue my higher education, I dreamt of attending Georgia Tech, known for its excellence in Aerospace Engineering. However, while this was my dream university, I was keenly aware of the culinary challenges that awaited. I realized that I needed to find a way to reconcile my academic aspirations with my dietary requirements.

My determination led me to connect with the Georgia Tech Dining services. I reached out to a dietician and chef to educate them about my Jain diet and explore ways in which we could collaborate to offer Jain-friendly options within the constraints of a bustling college dining hall. Numerous emails, phone calls, and meetings later, we established a smooth process for accommodating Jain diets.

Over time, my persistent lobbying efforts bore fruit, as Georgia Tech decided to officially add Jain diet as an

option on the housing and meal application. This change not only created awareness about Jain dietary choices but also led to a surge in the number of students opting for a Jain meal plan. Recognizing this growing demand, Georgia Tech initiated a Jain food station on campus, ensuring that students like me had access to Jain meals regularly. It was a major success for a major university to recognize the Jain diet and uphold it. My journey has taught me the significance of persistence in achieving cultural recognition. The Jain diet is not just a set of dietary restrictions; it is a means to feel closer to our religion, our heritage, and ourselves. By embracing our dietary traditions, we honor our ancestors and carry forward the values of non-violence and mindfulness. It is a way to bridge the gap between our past and present, ensuring that our cultural heritage remains an integral part of our lives.

My journey from childhood to adulthood has been defined by my commitment to my Jain diet. It has not only shaped my identity but also influenced my educational choices. By working closely with Georgia Tech Dining, I have helped create awareness and acceptance of Jain diets on campus. I hope my story inspires others to take pride in their dietary traditions, no matter how unique they may be, and encourage the further inclusion of diets in everyday life.

This journey would not have been possible without the support of the Georgia Tech Dining. They supported me and the Jain diet each step of the way, listening and learning from feedback and aiming to meet mine and others' needs. It is important to advocate for what you stand for, and I am grateful that Georgia Tech made my mission possible..

ESSAYS BY PATHSHALA STUDENTS IN NORTH AMERICA

Beginning with the February 2023 issue, the Jain Digest Editorial Team has started a new series of articles – essays written by the Pathshala students in North America. Many Jain Centers in USA and Canada have been conducting Pathshala classes for several years. Many volunteers provide selfless service to the Jain communities by teaching the students about Jain principles, values, rituals, culture, Indian languages, etc. Essay competitions are held to motivate the students to stimulate their thinking and analytical skills about what they have learned in Pathshala. We continue this effort to showcase the winning entries from one Jain Center in each issue of Jain Digest. In the June and October 2023 issues we showcased essays by students from Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago. (JSMC) In this issue we bring you essays by two students from **Jain Center of Greater Boston (JCGB)**. We hope that you will enjoy reading these essays and be pleased with the talent these students exhibit. We would love to hear from you. Write us note at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com

Spirituality in Adversity

By Nirjara Akkole



Nirjara is currently a Junior at Walpole High School and a resident of Walpole, MA. About JCGB Pathshala, Nirjara says, "JCGB Pathshala is an integral part of my family's life, a warm and welcoming community that has integrated Jain principles into my day to day thinking. I cannot imagine my life without the constant backbone that is JCGB- an unwavering and supportive atmosphere that has allowed me to prosper into who I am today."

I hide behind the drapes of my mother's dupatta, the strong fragrance of dhoop wafting through my nostrils. I fold my chubby hands together, admiring the quiet hum of prayers around me, each and every individual deeply enveloped in devotion. "Niru, close your eyes", my mother says. So I do- beginning to quietly recite the only prayer I know at the time. "Om Namoh Arihantanam..." But just as I begin to sing, thought after thought interrupts me. *What's for dinner? What time is Patshala over? My friend got a new toy!* It was so incredibly strenuous for a naive 6 year old version of myself to focus on what stood in front of me. My thoughts wandered, lifting out and above the Mandir, being swayed to places that rested merely in a young child's imagination. My mind resembled a monkey, jumping from treetop to treetop, barely hanging on until it leapt to the branch.

As a young child, it is complex to grasp the concept of religion. It is an ideology, belief, and thought process that we so firmly trust in, despite its difficulty to be witnessed through the human eye. At age 6, it is solely a gesture to appease our parents, a simple Sunday morning routine that we complete. Now at age 16, I have acquired experiences and lessons that have allowed me to grow and learn, prospering in my Jain Identity.

Although it is arduous to be completely free from modern technologies in today's world, we can allow ourselves to utilize them as tools to maximize our human potential. At this stage, the application of Jainism to our daily lifestyle is what will be truly effective in granting us inner satisfaction. Encapsulated in a world that is constantly changing and developing, it is essential that we implement our Jain values to the many contemporary aspects of our life. Whether it be performing pooja every weekend or taking the time to study and understand the meaning of scripture, religious activity is what will keep us grounded. When facing adversity in life, it is a basic human instinct to channel our pain into external measures, desperately seeking any sign of comfort. However, Jainism and its principles allow us to balance grief and sorrow. Recently, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, a twist in fate that blindsided my family. While initially being a tough pill to swallow, the practice of our Jain lifestyle kept us cognizant of our surroundings and sure of the future. With the routine recital of Bhaktamarji, the energy in our household has remained positive and uplifted. With age, I have come to understand how Jainism truly impacts who I am as a person, and how it helps me maximize my emotional, physical, and spiritual potential.

While entirely detaching from society's worldly attachments may be difficult, we can use what is around us to spread the knowledge of our religion. Whether it be advocating for Jain principles such as vegetarianism through my school's Speech and Debate Team, or calmly resolving a fight with my friends, I have learned to use the communities around me to strengthen my Jain identity. The values that I have been taught throughout

my childhood have allowed me to grow into a cultured and educated young woman. Although I am still learning, the tools I have collected through my Jain education allow me to be a good citizen in today's society. By witnessing the world through this lens of Jainism, I feel that my approach to certain situations is virtuous.

So, 6 year old Niru, let me tell you why we go to the temple.

Exploring Karma's Impact By Navadha Padliya



Navadha Padliya lives in Grafton, Massachusetts. She is a 9th grader at Grafton High School and has been attending Pathshala at JCGB since she was 3 years old. She is so thankful for the friends and family in her Jain community, and all of the Pathshala teachers who have inspired her over the past 11 years.

The most profound lesson I have learned from Jainism is that our fate is decided by our actions, or in other words Karma theory. As a young Jain from America, it is easy to feel separated from my religion and culture. I am not fluent in the language our scriptures are written in, and though I recite Namokar Mantra every night, I can't go to the temple as often as my relatives in India. Jainism, a concept brought onto me by my parents, left me uncertain about its impact on my life.

An idea that I frequently think about is cause and effect. For every action, there are consequences. This cycle is true for all living beings, regardless of race, religion, or species. At the core of Jainism lies the idea of cause and effect. According to Jain philosophy, every action, thought, or intention creates an invisible force, known as karma, that binds the soul to the cycle of birth and rebirth. If I plant a tomato seed in my garden, only tomatoes will grow from the seed. In the same way, my positive actions will reap positive outcomes.

I have been raised as a pure vegetarian for the entirety of my 14 years. Growing up, I've always had to explain

my dietary restrictions to my peers, often without a complete grasp of the underlying reasons. For years, I was unsure of why I couldn't eat birthday cake with my friends at their parties, or what the harm in getting a burger from McDonald's was. As I progress through the levels of Pathshala, being a vegetarian is now a conscious choice I make, rather than something I practice because of my upbringing. Jainism emphasizes the importance of Ahimsa, or non-violence, as the foundation of its teachings. This principle extends to all living beings, including animals and even microscopic organisms. By practicing non-violence in thought, speech, and action, individuals accumulate positive karma, leading them toward spiritual progress and enlightenment. I know now that being a vegetarian is not just for the environment and animals I am saving, but it also benefits me and allows me to better myself by accumulating Punya rather than Pap.

Jainism encourages a sense of responsibility for one's actions, recognizing that every decision, no matter how small, impacts the soul's journey. This accountability fosters a sense of self-awareness and mindfulness in Jains, as they strive to act in ways that align with their religion. Because of Jainism and the theory of karma, I've learned to take responsibility for my actions. This helps me make better choices and be aware of what will happen because of them.

Lastly, because of Karma theory, I have become less attached to physical possessions, and become a less greedy person. I am able to stay happy in the present moment, and not worry too much about the future, though it is difficult at times. I have minimized the quantity of things I purchase, and only get what I need, making me a more responsible spender who is more conscious of my purchases. By recognizing the impermanent nature of worldly things, you can find a greater sense of inner peace and reduced attachment to your possessions and the ups and downs of life.

In conclusion, as I have gotten older, and more aware of my actions and decisions, Jainism and the theory of Karma have helped me develop characteristics including non-violence, an understanding of consequences, responsibility, generosity, and mindfulness. I now understand what it means to be a Jain and I am incredibly grateful to be part of a loving and caring Jain community in greater Boston. Thanks to them, I have realized that whether you fully embrace Jainism or integrate some of its teachings into your life, understanding the power of karma can offer valuable insights into personal growth, ethical living, and spiritual development.

Shree Bhagavati Sutra Agam Vaachana

Compiled humbly on behalf of the Disciples of PP Panyas Dr.Arunvijayji Maharaj, by Dr. Vijay Shah



Dr. Vijay Shah's interests, focus on subjects ranging from karma theory, dhyaan sadhana, Aagam shastras, kriyas, and scholarly works on the path of liberation as revealed by Tirthankaras. Other related interests include vipassana, meditative yoga, and life sciences. As a professional, Dr. Shah teaches in the field of business management and has several scholarly publications. To join the JAINA WhatsApp group for class start updates and zoom links, send your name and cell number to vcshah778@gmail.com

Param Pujya Panyas Dr. Arunvijayji Maharajsaheb's dream was to spread the word of Tirthankar Mahavir to the entire world. Tirelessly, Pujya Maharajsaheb pursues his dream fully, by delivering 6 live zoom classes, illustrating on the blackboard, daily, consistently, whether in vihar, or fasting. Khoob Khoob Anumodana from all of us!



For JAINA the year 2023 started with the Agam vachana of Shree Uttradhayana Sutra and continues consistently every weekend till date. Coming attraction for the 2024 year is the Agam Vachana of the auspicious "Shree Bhagwati Sutra", (short summary below). and back by popular demand, "Ayurveda and Healthy Living", on Friday evenings. Expected start in mid-February. Required registration with name & cell number has already started.

We are extremely grateful and blessed that Pujya Maharajsaheb, has agreed to start this live interactive zoom class as soon as we finish Shree Uttradhayana Sutra. What more can we ask from our punya uday, than have a practicing panch mahavratdhari of 54 years, an accomplished Panyas, with an academic caliber of two PhDs, reveal the secrets of this Agam!

The weekend timings and zoom link will be remain same as on JAINA website and as below. We invite the entire Jain community to take advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity for live interactive classes with Pujya Maharajsaheb.

Shree Bhagavati Sutra Brief Summary

The revelation of the divine path of liberation from the Tirthankara Mahavir Bhagwan starts with the tripadi: Upaneyevā, Vigameyavā, Dhurveyevā, i.e. all substances originate, transform and yet retain a permanent state. Based on the tripadi, the ganadhara constructed the twelve-fold, Dvadaśāṅga scriptures called the Agamas. Bhagavati Sutra is the fifth of the Dvadaśāṅga literature in the Ardha-Māgadhi language presented as a conversation (36,000 questions/answer) between Tirthankara Mahāvīra and his principal disciples.

It's a colossal work spanning across many areas of Jainā philosophy, practices of Ahimsa, and Karma theory. Includes history, culture, and economic condition of India during evolution of "Jainā" thought relative to other philosophical schools prevalent at that time. The Bhagwati Sutra not only has a philosophical content of a very high degree but has many implications for modern sciences like the atomic theory and detailed analysis of matter. Also, integrated are many other areas like mathematics, physics, metaphysics, cosmology, astronomy, ethics, rebirth, and life sciences.

Classes meet every Saturday and Sunday at 10:15am EST USA, 8.45pm IST, over Zoom. Meeting ID: 837 1600 8967 Passcode: JAINA

All past lecture series available at https://www.youtube.com/@VeralayamDr.Arunvijay_M

